

# THE GREEN OAK

ALGIRDAS LANDSBERGIS

and CLARK MILLS



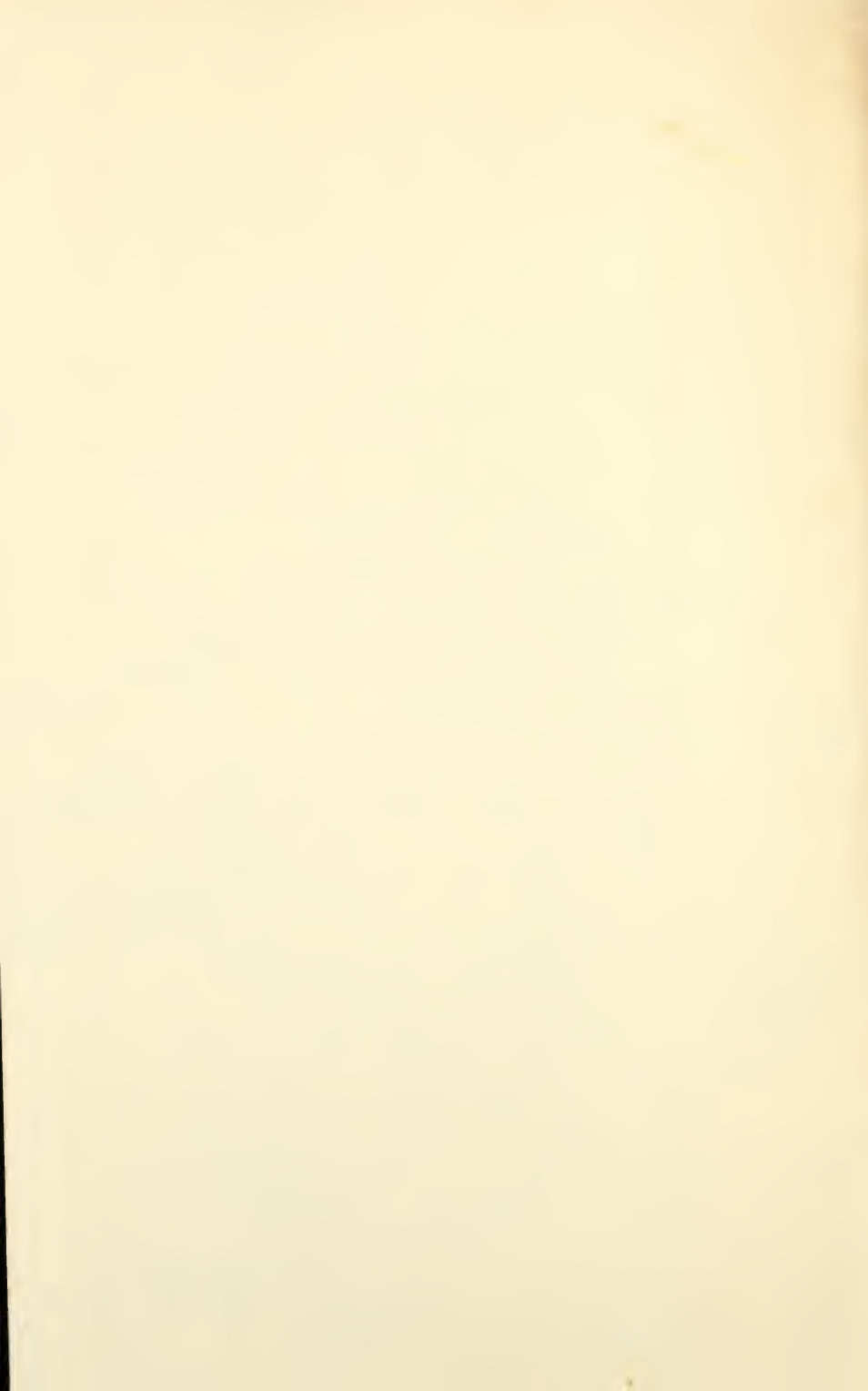
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THE GREEN OAK



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# THE GREEN OAK

Selected Lithuanian Poetry

Edited by

ALGIRDAS LANDSBERGIS

and CLARK MILLS



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## INTRODUCTION

Lithuanian poems and folk-songs are simple, direct, and intimately bound to the land and the forces of nature. To the "sophisticated" western reader, versed in the elaborate manners and trends of the mid-twentieth century, they should bring an unexpected freshness and delight. One American collaborator in the preparation of *The Green Oak* has described the "shock of pleasure" that some of them awoke in him, as if he "had come upon a cave lined with beautiful prehistoric paintings." And Robert Payne, who translated several of the folk-songs for this volume, has written similarly of their impact:

"The *dainos* of Lithuania have a beauty and pure primitive splendor above anything I know in western literature. They seem to have been written at the morning of the world, and the dew is still on them.

"The people who wrote and sang them are among the most enviable who ever lived. They had a deep instinctive feeling for the simplest of all things—for woods and running water and girls' faces and the colors of the sky. They sang artlessly, as though singing were as easy as breathing; but how much art there is in their artlessness!

"This is where song begins."

*The Green Oak* is a selection of 113 Lithuanian poems in English translation by 23 American and British poets. Except for about a dozen, which have appeared in reviews and elsewhere, these versions are new and have been prepared especially for this volume. In Part I (*Dainos*), the earliest of the folk-songs date from some thousands of years ago; the last signed work in Part II (*Poems*) is by Algimantas Mackus, who was born in 1932. Part III (*In other languages*) provides as an annex a few examples of work by Lithuanian poets, or poets of Lithuanian extraction, who wrote principally or exclusively in Latin, Polish, Russian and French.

The proliferation of the *daina*, or folk-song, through millennia of the development of the Lithuanian people, is unique in the history of cultures. The circumstances of its origins are unknown, but the mythological songs, which concern the sun and moon, the stars and other "natural mysteries," reflect early Lithuanian beliefs of which we now have but scant knowledge. Closely related to these beliefs are the *dainos* in which the oak tree plays a central role as a symbolic, or substitute father, and represents the masculine concept in general. Songs of work as well as some of the dance and game songs are also among the oldest in the culture. Originally pure lyrical songs, a number of *dainos*, which date from within the past two centuries, could also be described as examples of the popular ballad. In his *Lithuanian Narrative Folksongs*, Dr. Jonas Balys has made a detailed compilation and analytical survey of this special form.\*

The *daina* has survived because song is to Lithuanians an organic part of work and the business of life. Lithuanians have sung *dainos* not only on holidays, at weddings and other festive occasions, but as they labored in the fields, in the moments before and after meals, and as a natural accompaniment—not addressed primarily to an audience—of every activity of the day. Dr. Antanas Maceina has described this trait of Lithuanian life: ". . . There is hardly a phase of it which is not permeated by songs: birth and death, wedding and name-day, the harvests of hay and rye are reflected in songs. The warm summer nights when the young men lead the horses to pasture, the long peaceful winter evenings when women spin and men braid hemp into rope—all begin with song, are accompanied by songs, and end with songs."†

Western readers should know that the *dainos* were not first composed as poems, to which a melodic line was later added. Melody and phrase appeared simultaneously as songs, "at the same creative moment," in the words of Dr. Maceina. Partly for this reason, we cannot analyze the *dainos* by familiar western prosodic standards; their rhythms are variable and often mixed, with stresses that shift unpredictably according to the musical figure with which they came into being. Although rhyme was largely omitted in the older *dainos*, later folk-songs, under German and Polish

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\*See Selected Bibliography.

†In *Lituanus*, No. 1, 1961.



influences, used some simple rhyme patterns (a, b, a, b; a, a, b, b, in long couplets; etc.). Some readers have mistakenly believed that the *daina* made frequent use of rhyme, because the diminutive suffix, which often appears at the line-endings, automatically produces what we would call in English a false rhyme, or pair of identical sounds.

Between ten and twelve thousand *dainos* exist in published form, from among some 200,000 which have been recorded. This total of course includes scores and hundreds of variations on a limited number of pivotal themes; the *daina*, like any authentic folk-song, developed as a purely oral medium and was transmitted, in countless versions, by individual singers from generation to generation.

European critics have often pointed to the moral purity of the *dainos* and suggested that their principal creators were women. This should not imply that they are "feminine" in any derogatory sense. In their treatment of love, for example, they express emotions that blend the practical and the sensual, the romantic and the erotic with varying emphases, through a symbolism which never descends to the gross or the obscene. As a whole, the *dainos* comprise a lyrical folk epos in which we find no martial spirit, and in which industry, loyalty and affection for people and the things of the earth predominate.

Part I of this volume presents a minute sampling from the scope and sheer number of these folk-songs. It is to be hoped that a separate collection of these unique texts will follow and reinforce the pioneer work of Adrian Paterson and Uriah Katzenellenbogen in this little explored field.\* Such a volume could uncover a wealth of new poetic values and open wide vistas for anthropological study.

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Part II (Poems) contains examples from the entire range of work by individual Lithuanian poets. An early period of Lithuanian poetry—which dates from about the appearance of the first Lithuanian book in 1547 to Antanas Strazdas (1763-1833)—was not especially marked by power of inspiration, variety of content or formal perfection. While some of the poems from this time are

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\*See Selected Bibliography.

still valued in Lithuania for patriotic or sentimental reasons, they would convey little to readers of English whose tradition is different from that of the Lithuanian past. Above this plain of limited inspiration and form, Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714-1780), in his fables and in his long poem *The Seasons*, looms like a mountain.

Born in Lithuania Minor (a part of East Prussia near the present Lithuanian border), Donelaitis spent most of his life as pastor of a village parish. Here he remained in close contact with the serfs of the region, and developed a deep and sympathetic understanding of every facet of their lives. At the same time, he maintained a strong interest in poetry and music, and especially in the Greek and Roman classics; it was from these that he adapted the classical hexameter to the rhythmic peculiarities of Lithuanian.

*The Seasons* embodies the qualities of the Lithuanian landscape, provides insights into the activities of the common people, and describes the lives of animals, birds and even the insects of wood and field. In it Donelaitis's didactic strictures, as well as his wealth of concrete sensory data, are couched in a tone of high ethical seriousness, and combine to portray both the joyful beauty and the ephemerality of earthly life. Donelaitis is classed among the first true realists of European literature; his poem is free from the artificial notes that appear in roughly comparable works of such of his contemporaries as James Thompson in England, Evald von Kleist in Germany or Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France. An essential sanity, which is common to the classics, and a consummate artistry whose effects are achieved by deceptively simple means—at times even by the crudities of peasant speech—are notable qualities in this poet, who is regarded today as the greatest of Lithuania.

The name of Strazdas marks the return of poets to the qualities of the *daina* and their greater independence of foreign influences. After Strazdas, one important work dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. The long poem of nature, *The Pine Grove of Anykščiai* by Antanas Baranauskas (1835-1902), adds intensity of feeling to fertility of poetic invention; within the romantic tradition, it displays, like *The Seasons*, sharp realistic observation. The fall of the forest in this poem is symbolic of the tragedies that have befallen Lithuania in its recent history.

Lyric poetry reached its full development only in the second half of the nineteenth century, at the time of the so-called national awakening, and achieved a kind of perfection in the work of Maironis (1862-1932). Before his time the lyric had found expression in the everyday language of the people, and had followed, in its versification, a syllabic count wholly unsuited to the irregular rhythms of the language. Maironis brought a new tonal, or rhythmic structure, established norms of poetic language and diction, and introduced a number of formal and other innovations.

The greatest efflorescence of Lithuanian literature coincided with the period of full independence of the country. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the poetry in one swift development underwent the transformations and absorbed and transmuted the influences which in the poetry of other countries had taken centuries to evolve. At first the generation that followed Maironis shaped itself under influences of Polish and Russian romanticism (Gustaitis, Gira, Vaitkus); in a later phase (Putinas, Kirša, Sruoga), the Russian symbolists exerted a decisive influence. Modern poetic trends reached Lithuania only during the period of independence. The poets of the *Keturi Vėjai* (Four Winds) movement (Binkis, Rimydīs) produced the first examples of futurist, dadaist and surrealist poetry. They were followed by other groupings, which expressed trends of estheticism, neo-symbolism, expressionism and revolutionary romanticism.

The individual traits of the outstanding poets of the independence period transcend these definitions. In the poems of Jonas Aistis (1904- ), intimate personal themes have found the purest expression in Lithuanian poetry. In his work Aistis has transformed the language into an instrument of remarkable subtlety and refinement—qualities which are a source of despair to the translator. Salomėja Nėris (1904-1945), like Antanas Miškinis (1905- ), has achieved one of the most successful individual adaptations of the qualities of the *daina*; their poems represent peaks of Lithuanian lyricism. Echoes of the Old Testament and of medievalism exist together with satire and patriotic rhetorical verse in the poems of Bernardas Brazdžionis (1907- ). Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas (1893- ) also displays a wide range, from the romanticism of his earlier work to the intellectual poems of his later production. And Henrikas Radauskas (1910- ) has success-

fully recast the modern western poetic idiom in a sharply defined classical mold.

Upon the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviets, a large number of the poets went into exile, as creative intellectuals have done from throughout the Soviet empire. Several of the most important names are now to be found in the United States (Aistis, Brazdžionis, Kirša, Radauskas); and the eloquent voices of a young generation of Lithuanian poets are also heard from North America.

With minor exceptions, the youngest poets in exile have developed under the influence of western poetic movements and the existentialist philosophies; much of their poetry treats of the meaning of human existence on earth. The Lithuanian earth remains the principal source and topic of the poems of Kazys Bradūnas (1917- ), while for Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (1920- ) the native landscape serves as a point of departure, and often return, for his metaphysical journeys. In their later volumes a kind of serenity softens the tragic outlines of Nyka-Niliūnas's existentialist solitude or the rebellious romanticism of Henrikas Nagys (1920- ).

All the work of the emigre poets is banned in their native country, where the communists have attempted to transform them into what one might call Orwellian un-persons. Those who remained at home were obliged to submit to that treatment which is exemplified in the names of Mandelstam or Pasternak. The Soviet cultural regimen has been a blessing only to malleable hacks, who could never have earned literary prestige by the intrinsic worth of their writing, and to authors whose style and world view were narrow enough to fit comfortably into the party mold:

Since 1944 a new generation of poets has grown up in the occupied country. Some of these, such as Baltakis, Karalius, Marcinkevičius and Vaičiūnaitė, have undeniable talent; that they have nevertheless failed to produce works comparable to those of their compatriots in exile is, of course, not necessarily due to a lesser ability. A door closed to non-communist literature, pressure on poets to construct journalistic verses for specific occasions and on fixed themes, lowered standards of poetic language, official hostility to individual expression—such influences have stunted and distorted the growth of poetry, which in Lithuania today has a



distinct stamp of epigonism, and is now a hybrid of some of the schools of the independence period and of Soviet verse, in which a paraphrase of Mayakovski is considered the utmost in avant-garde innovation. In these conditions, the determined effort of many poets to maintain their integrity—as Lithuanians, as artists, as men—deserves admiration.

Many poems—and perhaps the best—are doubtless written for the poet's desk drawer to await better times. The controlled press of Lithuania continually upbraids young poets for sins of "individualism" and for their deviation from the dogmas of "socialist realism." Nevertheless, one can distinguish even in some published verses a nostalgia for genuine poetry, liberated from lies and cant.



Part III (*In other languages*) offers a few examples of work by poets who did not write in Lithuanian but who, in the formative periods of their lives and in the content of their work, must be regarded as Lithuanian either completely or to some degree. These are Adam Mickiewicz, Jurgis Baltrušaitis and O. V. de L.-Milosz.\*

Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) is regarded as the greatest poet of Poland and as a spiritual leader of that nation, despite the fact that he spent most of his life in Lithuania, Russia, Switzerland, France, Italy and Turkey. Few western readers are aware that he was born in Novogrodek (Naugardukas) in what is now Byelorussia (at that time in the Lithuanian area of the Commonwealth); or that principal elements in his work stem from his childhood and adolescence there and from his experience at the University of Vilnius. Mickiewicz has given ample evidence of the germinal importance of his Lithuanian origins in *Pan Tadeusz*, in the *Crimean Sonnets* and elsewhere. He has characterized himself as *gente Lituanus, natione Polonus* (Lithuanian by birth, Polish by nationality).

Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1873-1944) wrote both in Lithuanian and Russian, in the course of a career in which he was also active

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\*This section also contains one poem from a large group of Latin versions by Lithuanian poets, written in the 15th-17th centuries, in the fashion of the European humanist poetry of the period.

as diplomat and leader of public affairs. His talent for languages, it is said, enabled him to read Sophocles, Dante, Cervantes, Racine, Milton, Fröding and Slowacki in the originals. Baltrušaitis's poems in Russian placed him at the forefront of the Russian symbolist movement, in which he was compared to Balmont and Vyacheslav Ivanov. It was in this phase of his development that the young Boris Pasternak sought his patronage.

The poems of Baltrušaitis were published only in limited editions, few copies of which are now extant, even in libraries. Soviet-sponsored anthologies would seem to deny his existence, by omission; he is a poet who, posthumously a victim of international political collisions, seems almost to have disappeared from the face of the earth.

O. V. de L.-Milosz (1877-1939) is generally accepted as a French poet of Lithuanian origin. In his work he migrated not only to French literature but also, later, to a tortuous mysticism grounded in the Old and New Testaments. Milosz has described himself as a "Lithuanian poet who writes in French," and his nostalgic *Insomnia* and *The Carriage, Halted at Night* are among his least equivocal poems and his most touching cries for the homeland.

Baltrušaitis and Milosz served as ministers of their country in Moscow and Paris respectively. Biographic incidents of this kind, and other accidents of migration, are common in the literatures of our times. The Irishman Samuel Beckett, like the Romanian Ionesco, is now a pillar of French avant-garde drama; Joseph Conrad chose to abandon his native Polish to become a classic writer of English prose; and the Pole Wladyslaw Chodasiewicz (Khodasevich) played a key role in post-symbolist Russian poetry. Countless instances come readily to mind.

It is natural and understandable that large as well as small nations should at times claim exclusive possession of such writers, who command more than one language and tradition. Without arguing the cases of Mickiewicz, Baltrušaitis and Milosz—each unique in itself, and none simple—it can be said that a dominant, if not the principal, formative influence in their work was that of their Lithuanian heritage and experience.



Here, parenthetically, a few notes on the Lithuanian language may be of use.

As the Germanic tongues, including English, gradually separated from the other Indo-European languages, some characteristics divided them sharply from most other members of the Indo-European family. These differences, and others, separate the Germanic prototypes from Lithuanian, which has preserved a far more ancient character and which can be said, in many cases, to follow the original Indo-European pattern.

Highly inflected, Lithuanian today has five declensions and seven declensional cases, as well as three numbers: the singular, the plural and the dual. Although Lithuanian nouns, the most ancient words in the vocabulary, evolved considerably in the thousands of years since the separation of the language from Primeval Indo-European, they still retain closer resemblances to that parent tongue than do the other parts of speech. One "novelty" in the Lithuanian noun is that long ago it lost the neuter gender, which we know to have existed in Old Lithuanian.

The language possesses a fully developed verbal system, with a great wealth of tenses and moods and copious participles, gerunds and other verbal forms. It also retains most of the Indo-European inflections, as well as nuances of the original pitch accent. The more distinctive Indo-European traits of modern Lithuanian are:

1. One of the best-preserved vowel systems among the Indo-European languages, and definitely the best-preserved among the living Indo-European tongues.

2. Preservation of most of the Indo-European consonants, except the palatals *k'*, *g'*, and *g'h*.

3. In the vocabulary, a number of words of most archaic origin: *sūnus* (son), *dūmai* (smoke), *javas* (grain), *Dievas* (god), etc.

4. Some nominal case endings identical with the original Indo-European: *-is*, *-us*; and also *-as*, which differs only slightly from the Primitive Indo-European ending, *-os*.

5. Retention of the free stress, and differentiation between two kinds of intonation, the acute and the circumflex, as was the case with Primitive Indo-European.

The prevalence of the diminutive in Lithuanian, where it ap-

pears more frequently than in any other language, presents difficulties which are virtually insurmountable to the translator. *Brolis* (brother), for example, has more than a score of forms, each with its caressive, affectionate or mildly derogatory implication. A few forms of *vaikas* (child) will suggest the nuances of these diminutive suffixes, which have no exact equivalents in other tongues: *vaikelis*: "dear child, a small child;"

*vaikiukas*: "a little . . . dainty . . . clever . . . or dexterous child, a little fellow;"

*vaikiūkštis*: "a child, a little boy, a (slightly) naughty boy;"

*vaikėzas*: "a naughty boy, unpleasant boy, 'big boy,' 'juvenile delinquent' . . ."\*

The following *daina*, in literal translation, will give some idea of the almost continuous use of the diminutive, not only in the folk-songs but in the language itself. Diminutive nouns appear in italics.

Pasakyk, mergužyte,  
Pasakyk, jaunoji:  
Kas žaliuoja žiemužėlę,

O ir vasarėlę?

Ne mergužė būčiau,  
Kad aš nežinočiau,  
Kas žaliuoja žiemužėlę,

O ir vasarėlę.

Girioje eglėlė,  
Daržely rūtėlė,  
Tai žaliuoja žiemužėlę,

O ir vasarėlę.

Pasakyk, mergužyte,  
Pasakyk, jaunoji:  
Kas yra lengvesnis  
Už žąsies plunksnelę?

Ne mergužė būčiau,  
Kad aš nežinočiau,

Tell me, *maiden*,  
Tell me, *young one*,  
What grows verdant in the  
*winter*  
And also in the *summer*?

Not a *maiden* would I be  
If I did not know  
What grows verdant in the  
*winter*  
And also in the *summer*.

In the forest a *spruce*,  
In the flower-garden a *rue*,  
That grows verdant in the  
*winter*  
And also in the *summer*.

Tell me, *maiden*,  
Tell me, *young one*,  
What is lighter  
Than a *goose feather*?

Not a *maiden* would I be  
If I did not know

\*Antanas Klimas: "The Noun," in *Lituanus*, No. 3, 1960.

Kas yra lengvesnis  
Už žąsies plunksnelę:

What is lighter  
Than a goose feather:

Bernužio rankelės  
Ant mano petelių  
Tai yra lengvesnės  
Už žąsies plunksnelę.

My own lad's hands  
On my shoulders,  
These are lighter  
Than a goose feather.

There is a remarkable variety and flexibility in the Lithuanian verbs and adjectives, which are easily transformed into nouns. "To feed," for example, is expressed by completely different words, according to whether their object happens to be an adult, a child, a pig, a fowl, a horse or cow, or a cat or dog. Such verbs can be interchanged only for ironic or sarcastic purposes.

As in any language, of course, many words carry musical and emotional overtones and suggestions which are unique to Lithuanian. Demie Jonaitis cites two illustrative instances:

"'Baltas,' or white, the *daina's* most popular color, can render a meaning so white that it expresses pure, dazzling, gracious and enchanting. A 'white lily' is translatable enough; a 'white sun' for a 'dazzling sun' is less translatable; but a 'white young man' can hardly suggest in English as it does in Lithuanian a dashing, hardy youth with blue eyes and blond hair, riding a powerful horse, sure of conquering an unconquerable world. 'Žalias,' green, second favorite among the *daina's* colors, describes wide fields, new wine, sweet mint and rue; but 'žalias' also suggests more than color. Its implications embrace the ideas of flourishing, freshness, richness and the deep ubiquitous aliveness of the earth of which the nature-loving Lithuanian is sensitively aware."\*

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The difficulties of translation, even from a language in which the translator is fluent, have been elaborated, perhaps excessively. But when most of the suggestive and musical values of the original represent unknown quantities, the problems might seem insoluble. Our approach to this difficulty is based on the belief that in most cases in the past attempts by a single translator to render a representative selection from a foreign poet have failed to the degree that his own personal idiom intruded. However faithful the meter

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\*In *Poet Lore*, Winter, 1941.

or literal sense of his version, the translator's traits and style almost always color it, usually unintentionally. A partial solution, it seemed to us, was to apportion separate poems to several poets, in the hope that their differences in manner would cancel one another, neutralize the personal factor, and thus permit the spirit of the original to suggest itself.

This approach offers another advantage in that it allows the translators to select poems according to their instinctive, individual responses. In a few instances the spark ignites to produce not a mere rendition, but a poem in its own right, just as the poet originally experienced it within himself. In our hope to invite such creative moments, we have avoided any exclusive "theory of translation;" rather, we have urged our collaborators to follow their own impulses.

The results have been, in some cases, versions quite faithful to the sense of the originals; in others, renderings that closely follow their meter and structure; and in still others, texts that can be described only as re-creations by means available in English and not in Lithuanian. Louise Bogan recently described this approach in a passage that deserves quotation. She wrote that: ". . . translators have left the hampering notion of word-for-word and line-for-line literalness far behind. They agree on certain points: that although the final 'essence' of the poem cannot be transferred, it can be suggested, by fidelity to the emotional tone, by the exact carrying over of images, and by the application of an attentive ear to what Pound has called 'the dance of intellect among words;' that unworkable meters must be eliminated; that the translator can (and perhaps should) be more skilled in the language he is putting the poem into than in the language he is taking it out of . . .".\* We believe that, whatever the outcome of our efforts, this attitude offers more promise of success than a more literal-minded stratagem.

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A. L.

C. M.





I

*Dainos*



The moon wedded the sun  
in the first springtime.

The sun rose in the dawn,  
the moon abandoned her,

wandered alone, afar,  
and loved the morning star.

Angered, Perkunas thundered  
and cleft him with a sword:

How could you dare to love  
the daystar, drift away  
in the night alone, and stray?

(Clark Mills)

I lost my little lamb  
Late in the evening.  
O, who will help me find  
My little lamb?

I went to the morning star  
And the star answered me:  
—I must build a fire  
For the morning sun.

I went to the evening star  
And the star answered me:  
—I must prepare a bed  
For the evening sun.

Then I went to the moon  
And the moon answered me:  
I have been cut by a sword,  
And my face is melancholy.

Then I went to the sun  
And the sun answered me:  
—Nine days I'll search for you,  
And I'll not rest on the tenth.

(Robert Payne)

Little he-goat, black-bearded,  
Grow up, grow up!  
The gods are waiting for thee.  
They are waiting.

On the cliff by the river  
A fire burns day and night,  
Shining like starlight.  
Ruginis, Žvaginis  
Will strangle God's little goatling.

During reaping, during sowing  
We shall lead thee, little blackbeard,  
We shall lead thee to the cliff.  
Ruginis, Žvaginis  
Shall strangle thee, little goatling,  
To the glory of God.

(Robert Payne)

Little tall rye,  
grain son,  
shoot that came winning through winter.

In the wide field  
you found foothold,  
you quickened red

and oh, sprang green  
the high hill over,  
you gave the field her dear dress.

Deathbound in winter  
rye that would-be,  
you held out for the bright sun.

Day warm,  
night cool,  
evening awake,

you grew up stout,  
you ripened robust,  
to all you are very precious.

Gold ear  
of grainlet suns,  
tall silver shaftling,

on you  
droplets of dew  
shine like silver buds.

You did not fear  
winter cold  
nor summer drought.

You feared only  
the steel scythe,  
the grain son reapers.

(Mary Phelps)

The oak, the linden,  
both green and both fair,  
stand by the road together.  
Branches incline within each other,  
leaves interweave in air.

Boy stands, girl stands,  
both of them young and fair,  
in their clasped hands together.  
Their shoulders lean one to the other,  
rings of betrothal given.

(Clark Mills)

O thou oak tree,  
tree so green,  
why this autumn  
art not green?

How this autumn  
should I be green?  
I heard coming  
woodcutters twain.

Many a branch  
the first one lopped off  
and my summit  
the second chopped off.

From this tree's branches  
I'll make a bed.  
I'll bend a cradling  
from this tree's head.

I myself will lay me  
on that same bed,  
and in the cradling  
I'll swing a maid,

half the day through  
till breakfast tide.  
Oh chuchia, lulia,  
my very own bride!

*(Adrian Paterson)*

So the father raised  
Nine sons altogether,  
And the tenth child came,  
A little daughter.

And the oak tree spread  
All its nine branches,



And the tenth branch was  
At the very top of the tree.

All the nine sons  
Were slaughtered in battle,  
But the tenth child was  
Saved in God's care.

So the father rested  
His sorrowful head,  
And his heavy heart  
Was quiet with grief.

A storm blew down  
All the nine branches,  
But the very top of the tree  
Was kept in God's care,

And the birds flocked to it—  
Cuckoo and nightingale,  
All sang and lamented  
On the very top of the tree.

*(Robert Payne)*

I had a little brother,  
He was dressed in finery.  
He had a brown pony  
With golden horseshoes.

When he rode over a meadow,  
The meadow trembled.  
He cut down the clover  
And stamped down the flowers.

When he rode over fields,  
The fields roared aloud.  
When he rode over the moors,  
The moors shouted.

He trod on the prickly thorns  
From which the cattle fled.  
He met a young maiden,  
A white lily.

He bade her good morning,  
But she did not answer.  
He doffed his cap to her,  
And she doffed her crown of flowers.

(Robert Payne)

High on the hill the willows twirled,  
High on the hill the willows twirled.  
Deep in the dell were waters purling;  
Lulling, the waters purled.

There went a maiden walking, bright,  
There went a maiden walking, bright.  
Bright walked the maiden, lovely lily,  
Lovely, a lily white.

Then came a young man riding there,  
Then came a young man riding there.  
There rode the young man, fair white clover,  
Clover so white and fair.

"Maiden, my maiden, young and white,  
Maiden, my maiden, young and white,  
Where will you sleep, my lovely lily,  
Where will you sleep tonight?"

"High in my father's barn I'll sleep,  
High in my father's barn I'll sleep;  
Deep in my mother's bed I'll slumber,  
Motley the bed and deep."

(Demie Jonaitis)

Fly, hawk, over the lake.  
In that lake a maelstrom spins.

Beside that whirlpool, garden of rue.  
In that garden a maiden weeps:

—For me no mother to gather dowry,  
for me no father to give my share,

for me no brother, the steeds to saddle,  
for me no sister to plait my wreath.

Sun mother, you, sun mother,  
sun mother, gather dowry;

moon father, you, moon father,  
moon father, give my share;

star sister, you, star sister,  
star sister, plait my wreath;

and you, brother Orion,  
brother Orion, go with me through the meadow.

*(Clark Mills)*

We shall drink beer today.  
Tomorrow we'll set forth  
for the Magyar land.

There, rivers are wine  
and apples, golden—  
the forests, orchards.

And what shall we do  
in the Magyar land?

There we'll build us a city  
with precious jewels  
and window-sunlets.

And when shall we return  
from the Magyar land?

When pikestaffs burst with buds  
and stones explode with flowers  
and trees grow on the sea.

*(Clark Mills)*

There is a high mountain  
Set in the rivers and seas.  
On top of the mountain  
Rises a green oak tree.

So in despair I swam  
And clung to the oak tree.  
—Dear oak tree, please change yourself,  
Become my father.

And you, dear growing branches  
Become arms of flesh-like whiteness,  
And you, dear little leaves,  
Turn to loving words.

Sorrowing I went away  
Weeping bitterly,  
For the oak tree has not changed,  
Has not become my father.

And the dear growing branches  
Are no arms of flesh-like whiteness,  
And the little green leaves  
Have not turned to loving words.

*(Robert Payne)*

Hey, nowhere, nowhere,  
are there such gardens  
as this my father's!  
Pearl leaves  
and golden flowers  
—diamond apples!  
Oh, and flying, flying  
a speckled cuckoo came  
into Father's garden!  
And she perched there,  
all glitter in the air,  
and as she flew away  
she tinkled, tinkled.

*(Clark Mills)*

Through the night, the long night,  
I scarcely slept a wink.  
I went to find my horses  
In the green forest.

Morning had not dawned yet,  
The sun had not risen  
When I heard the latest news  
Of my young beloved.

—My dear little maiden,  
Have I not warned you  
Never to dance with young lads,  
Those big stupid boys?

She had plucked the young roses  
Whose buds were scarcely opened.  
She has flung off the veil  
She has scarcely worn.

*(Robert Payne)*

O little sun, God's daughter,  
Where have you been dwelling?  
Where have you been straying?  
Why have you left us alone?

—I have kept shepherds warm,  
I have shielded the orphans  
Beyond the seas and mountains.

O little sun, God's daughter,  
Who kindled the fires in the evening?  
Who kindled the fires in the evening?  
Who made your bed for you?

O morning and evening star!  
The morning star my fire,  
The evening star my bed.  
Many kinsmen have blessed me,  
And many are my treasures!

(Robert Payne)

I've told my mother, I refused  
oh, at least half a summer past!

Mother, it's time—you should begin,  
find you a girl to weave and spin.

I've spun the white flax quite enough,  
woven fine linen cloth enough,

hay in the meadow raked my fill,  
garnered enough rye on the hill! . . .

O wreath of rue that crowns my head,  
how long shall you stay green and glad?

And you, green silken sunlit braids,  
how soon, too soon! your luster fades.



And my hair, O my yellow hair,  
no longer tousled in the air . . .

I'll visit Mother and not laugh,  
unwreathed—but wear my marriage coif.

O marriage coif, my lovely own,  
you'll rustle, in the soft wind blown.

And you, my patterns, wound so fine,  
in sun will not lose all your sheen.

You, my green silken braids, I'll keep,  
and see you on the wall, and weep.

. . . My rings, my golden rings, you must  
lie in my dower chest and rust.

*(Clark Mills)*

Beyond my father's gates  
There is a deep, deep lake.

Two ducklings swim about in it.  
Quacking as they swim.

No, they are not two ducklings.  
They are two little brothers.

Oh listen, little brother,  
To the words of our father.

He says he'll buy us horses  
And saffron-leather saddles

To carry us far away  
Beyond the green forests

Where we shall often weep  
And very seldom sing.

No lovely maidens live there.  
There are no quiet singing places.

The lovely maidens live there.  
There are quiet singing places.

*(Robert Payne)*

Whence did it rise,  
this high hill?  
From all my sighs.

Whence flowed this clear  
water together?  
From tear on tear.

Oh, far away, away  
my home lies—  
two hundred miles, they say.

Beyond wide seas,  
rivers, and forests  
of dark trees.

God, pity me,  
dear God—this lad,  
my true love is not he.

My husband is unkind,  
his mother stern,  
his sisters of her mind.

With sewing-frame  
and my thin needle  
I'd swim back whence I came.

Oh, all's forlorn—  
needle and frame are broken,  
my green silk torn.

I shall go down,  
small as a minnow,  
and in the seas drown!

Oh, yes, no more  
than minnow, I'll  
leap up to the shore!

In the wide waters  
it's hard here  
where the wave shatters.

*(Clark Mills)*

Rise, mother sun, rise!  
So small, we shepherds,  
and short, our jackets  
of fur. We are so cold,  
so cold.

*(Clark Mills)*

There had come, there had come,  
there had come here  
from the town of Giliya  
a ship of juniper.

Then my old father  
I asked to tell  
where the ship to steer,  
where to set sail.

Should it be for the deep  
or for the shallows?

Neither for the deep  
nor for the shallows!

But for an open port  
where dwells a maid  
in a lofty cottage,  
her trim homestead.

There the fair maid stays,  
daughter of the days,  
weaving and ravelling  
and embroidering

from the very corners  
in circles of thread  
many a red  
and green flower head,

and in the middle,  
right in the middle,  
a yellow sun  
with the stars little.

(Adrian Paterson)

Comely, the cuckoo sang  
In the grove, combing her hair.

Look, how fair is my hair!  
So much like the summer day.

Fingers covered with rings,  
The manor filled with guests.

(Ilona Gražytė and Henrikas Nagys)

Sing, my dear sister! Tell me why you do not sing.  
And why lean on your hands, that are so tired already?

—How can I sing? And how could I be gay and joyous?  
Disaster walks my flower-garden, yes, disaster.

The rue is trampled and the roses crushed and culled,  
the lilies scattered and the dew-drops brushed away.

—But did the north wind blow? Or the river overflow?  
Or did the thunder burst and lightning strike from heaven?

—The north wind did not blow, nor the river overflow,  
nor thunder burst, nor lightning flash down out of heaven

No, bearded men, men who invaded from the seas,  
climbed up the shore, despoiled the garden of my flowers.

They trod over the rue, they crushed and culled the roses,  
scattered the lilies and the dew-drops brushed away.

And even I scarcely endured, by miracle,  
beneath a spray of rue—beneath an ebon wreath.

*(Clark Mills)*

Look through the window, Sweet.  
What winds are there blowing?  
—The same wind as yesterday,  
The blessed wind from the north.

Give me a ship to sail in  
Far over the sea,  
And I shall bring home with me  
Black silk and green rue.

Black silk for a banneret  
Embroidered with fishermen,  
And the rue, the green rue  
For weaving garlands.

*(Robert Payne)*

Roar, roar, my millstones!  
They think I do not grind alone.

I ground alone, I sang alone,  
alone I turned the stone,

Dear lad, why did you press me,  
me, maiden of such woes?

Heart's lad, didn't you know  
I wasn't in the manor-house, at ease?

Into the marsh up to my knees,  
into the water to my shoulders . . .  
My days are hard!

*(Clark Mills)*

It's the rooster's fault,  
The rooster's fault,  
He did not love the hen.  
In a week, in a week,  
She laid only one egg.

*(Uriah Katzenelenbogen)*

The son of Kosciusko lies on the battlefield,  
For his death was deserved, being obstinate—  
Wilfulness was his undoing, nor would he listen  
To father or mother, or anyone at all  
Of his own standing.

So let a letter be written: let it be written quickly,  
And let his father make quick reply,  
So that we may know where to bury him.  
High in the mountain under an oak tree,  
In the white sands.



There in the white sands under the oak tree  
The green oak shall become his father,  
And the white sands will become his mother,  
And the green maples will be his brothers,  
And the lindens his sisters.

*(Robert Payne)*

The matchmaker comes—oh, my! oh, my!—  
With big wooden shoes. That will be fine!

Big wooden shoes—oh, my! oh, my!—  
Fine for the dancing, just fine!

The matchmaker comes—oh, my! oh, my!—  
With nose so big. That will be fine!

A big, big nose—oh, my! oh, my!—  
Will cover us. That will be fine!

*(Ilona Gražytė and Henrikas Nagys)*

O Mother, my heart and life,  
Tell me the meaning of my dreams.  
A jackdaw flew over the cherry orchard  
Spinning green silk  
And scattering white pearls.

O Son, my heart and life,  
I will tell you the meaning of your dreams.  
The jackdaw is your bride,  
The green silk is her hair,  
And the white pearls are tears.

*(Robert Payne)*

I was a pilgrim,  
And I went on a pilgrimage.  
Not far away  
I came upon a maiden.

I went beyond the forests,  
I went beyond the meadowland.  
More than two hundred miles away,  
More than three hundred.

The maiden was in flower  
In a garden of rue,  
Among roses and rue  
And the bright carnations.

Tu-whit, tu-whoo!  
The maiden in the rue,  
How sweet and how lovely  
Is my green maiden!

. . . I was a pilgrim  
And I went on a pilgrimage.  
Not far away  
I came upon a boy.

I went beyond the forests,  
I went beyond the meadowland.  
More than two hundred miles away,  
More than three hundred.

The boy was in flower  
In a garden of thistles,  
Among thistles and burdock,  
In the wild nettles.

Tu-whit, tu-whoo!  
The boy in the thorns,  
How coarse and spiky  
Is my thorny boy!

(Robert Payne)

Nobles of Lithuania saddled up their steeds,  
saddled their steeds to ride away to war.

The first sister polished the brothers' swords,  
the second helped them don their battle dress.

And the third sister, she who was the youngest,  
opened the gate wide and wept for sorrow.

—O brother, brother of mine, my own brother,  
can you still overtake the troop of riders  
and find the enemy host, and hew and slash?

—Yes, I shall overtake and I will slash,  
but God alone knows if I shall return.

—My sisters, let us go to the broad highway,  
it may be we shall live to see our brothers.

On a hill we stood, and our feet dug a pit,  
we leaned, and wore an ash-tree fence away.

. . . But did not live to welcome our own brother,  
brother of ours, the dearest and the youngest.

His steed ran back alone, whinnying loud,  
at his side the stirrups free as pendulums.

—You steed, O dark bay steed, tell us, tell us,  
where did you leave our own, our dearest brother?

—If I must tell you, you will weep for sorrow,  
and if I do not, all the grief is mine.

Your brother rests in Riga town today,  
he rests in Riga town, in a strange land.

I plunged into nine rivers, swam across,  
into a tenth I plunged, and plunged across.

Nine bullets, nine! hissed and slapped past,  
and the tenth bullet found your youngest brother.

Where his head lay still on the still earth,  
a bush of roses flowered, beautiful.

And as the droplets of his fierce blood flowed,  
beautiful, the red jewels gleamed and glistened.

(Clark Mills)

Hoi, you young birdlings,  
I wish to be married.  
The gray-coated thrush  
Will saddle my horses,  
The beaver with marten's cap  
Will be the driver,  
The slender-legged hare  
Will be the poursuivant,  
The crystal-clear nightingale  
Will sing the hymnals,  
And the leaping magpie  
Will whirl in the dances.

The wolf with his big trumpet  
Will play on the pipes,  
The bear with huge paws  
Will chop up the wood,  
The crook-back crow  
Will carry the water,  
The white-aproned swallow  
Will wash all the dishes,  
The bushy-tailed squirrel  
Will set the table,  
And the silk-clothed vixen  
Will sit by my bride.

(Robert Payne)

My dear heart, my mother,  
so little now, so old,  
why did you let me be?

Was it for toils, afflictions  
and the slanders  
of every passer-by?

—No, not for afflictions  
nor for your toil  
nor for the town slanders.

—My dear heart, my mother,  
so in your disregard,  
why did you let me be?

You could have taken me  
and thrown me deep,  
deep into the lake,

I could have drowned,  
become playmate  
of all the fishes

that fishermen, amazed,  
would lift up in their silken  
nets,—! Myself—strange catch.

Yes! They could have taken  
with all their fishes me  
in their webs of silk.

Oh, they could have fished  
and easily taken me  
in their wide silken nets!

Not speckled pike, I could have been  
betrothed to a fisherman  
and daughter-in-law to fishers.

(Clark Mills)

Where are you going, my young fellow?  
—To Paris hundreds of miles away, my dear maiden.  
What will you wear there, my young fellow?  
—A uniform of green silk, my dear maiden.  
Where will you stay there, my young fellow?  
—By the great River Marne, my dear maiden.  
Where will the trumpets blow, my young fellow?  
—On the high hill, Montmartre, my dear maiden.  
Where will you rest there, my young fellow?  
—In the thick of battle, my dear maiden.  
Who will sing your praises, my young fellow?  
—Muskets and trumpets, my dear maiden.  
Who will carry you, my young fellow?  
—Courtiers, young generals, my dear maiden.  
Where will they bury you, my young fellow?  
—Under the church tower, my dear maiden.  
Shall we toll the bells, my young fellow?  
—Both bells, both together, my dear maiden.  
Shall we light the candles, my young fellow?  
—A hundred candles together, my dear maiden.

*(Uriah Katzenelenbogen)*

Through the fields lowing, the oxen are coming home  
and we walk with them, sisters joyfully singing.

Hola, come out, our brother ploughman, come!  
Hola, open the wide green copper gate!

Hola, open the wide green copper gate!  
Your ash-colored oxen are here to be let in.

Hola, let in your ash-colored oxen, please,  
and let her sleep, your maiden who tends the oxen.

*(Clark Mills)*

Husband dear, lying there soft as silk like a wolf.  
I am abandoned like a broken wheel,  
I am left alone like a crumbling wall—  
Ride on, ride on, bury him deep, let him not return,  
Let him not come back to me, let him not slip out  
and ask for parsley.  
If the stork comes flying, what will he say?  
The cuckoo will come, but he will not mend the fencehole.  
*(Robert Payne)*

She who wishes to be free  
And live in great delight,  
Let her marry a forester,

Let her marry a forester.  
A wanderer in the woods,  
A rover through the nights.

By day in the woods,  
By night in the inn drinking—  
And no work for her.

*(Uriah Katzenelenbogen)*

As I went into the lily-garden  
Five or six fellows stared at me.

As I was leaving the lily-garden,  
Five or six raised their hats to me.

As I was dancing with a strange fellow,  
They tore my apron with their spurs.

None of them asked whose beloved I was,  
But they shoved me into the corner.

And when I danced with my own beloved  
They bore me in their arms.  
*(Uriah Katzenelenbogen)*



The housewife drank a little sip,  
out of the little glass a sip  
she swallowed, drank and swallowed, yes, she drank!

She drank because she wanted to,  
only because she wanted to,  
wanted to drink, was glad, yes, glad to drink.

It tasted fine, for none was left,  
she smacked her lips and none was left,  
nothing was left, nothing, really nothing at all.

That's why she tilted up the glass,  
tilted the little glass up high,  
tilted it high and rolled it, tilted it up high.

*(Clark Mills)*

They hired me to mourn for you,  
And weep in lamentation.  
They promised me a sieve of beans,  
And a bountiful supply of lard.

I wonder: will they pay me or not?  
Should I mourn or not?  
Should I lament or not?

Help me out, sister,  
Where have you hidden your wool?

Little sister, I have found  
A song of lamentation.  
Deep in my heart I found it.  
Just yesterday you baked white loaves  
—Now you are lying on a plank.

*(Uriah Katzenelenbogen)*

## LAMENT FOR A SON (*Rauda*)

Oh, my dear child, my son, oh, what has frightened you? Was it the hard years, or my hard labors, or my hard life? You would not have been afraid—beside your father, your mother.

Oh, my dear child, my earth's blossom, my forest-nestling, my heaven's star, my mountain-berry!

Oh, my dear child, oh, I imagined, oh, I thought there was no place for my son! Oh, still there were hollows, still there were dales, there was a place for my dear child.

Oh, my father, my mother, oh, I am letting my child go who understands nothing, oh, who knows nothing yet! Oh, my father, oh, my mother, oh, take him by his white hands, seat him on the bench of the shades—oh, teach my child!

(*Algirdas Landsbergis*)



## II

### *Poems*



## *Kristijonas Donelaitis*

### THE SEASONS (*excerpts*)

(*from*) THE SPRING'S JOYS

Now the sun rose again to rouse the world  
and laughed to topple down chill winter's labors.  
And cold's creations, with the ice, diminished  
as foam of snow changed everywhere to nothing.  
Soon the bland weather stroked and woke the fields,  
called up herbs of all species from the dead.  
Thickets and every heath bestirred themselves;  
hill, meadow, dale threw down their sheepskin jackets.  
All that had perished in foul autumn, tearful,  
in the lake clung to life the winter through,  
or in some burrow slept beneath a bush,  
crept forth in crowd and throng to welcome summer.

And rats with skunks walked out of their cold crannies  
as crows, ravens and magpies, with the owls,  
mice and their offspring and the moles, praised warmth.  
Beetles, mosquitos, flies, a bounce of fleas  
formed their batallions everywhere to plague us  
and sting both peasant and his genteel Sir.  
And the queen bee remembered to awaken  
her hive and send it forth to gainful labor.  
Through chink and opening they swarmed in clouds  
to play their tuneful pipes in the mild air.  
Spiders, in corners motionless, wove yarn  
or soundless, climbed the scaffolds of their snares.  
And wolves and bears hopped to the forest-edge,  
joyful that someone might be there to rend . . .

(*Clark Mills*)

(*from*) THE TOILS OF SUMMER

"Hail, everchanging world, you've kept the feasts of springtime;  
Hail, man too, for you've survived to see the summer.  
Hail, your lusty sniffings; hail, your joy in flowers,

Hail! God grant you goodly springtimes in abundance;  
Strapping and carousing, may you live to meet them.  
God grant this to each who, loving his Lithuania,  
Tends his chores as serf and, faithful, speaks Lithuanian.  
May he meet, God willing, every spring robustly,  
May he go on merrymaking into summer.”  
Thus, before Whitsuntide, Prickus roused the peasants  
With a slant on how to labor in their serfdom.

“Look, a sturdy restless body, always busy,  
Seems to be a special gift from God, His finest.  
Such a man will hustle roundly till he’s drooping,  
Bow before his meager supper with contentment,  
Having eaten, thank the Lord with satisfaction,  
Roll into his bed, bedrowsed but strong and happy.  
He outwits the gentleman who, richly tailored,  
Reaches for his spoon, but stops to list his ailments.  
What’s the good that Mikols gives the world his presence,  
Bobbles bloated paunch, himself puffed like a bladder?  
Like some lowly rogue, he’s troubled and uneasy,  
Ever cringing, for, like Cain, he’s scared of heaven.  
What’s the good that Diksas, naked in his riches,  
Kneels before his hoard of gold and worships, groaning?  
When he needs to use one coin, he’s scared to take it;  
Starved, he swallows uncooked victuals like an idiot,  
Shivering in his ragged finery, near naked.

“We Lithuanians shod in bast shoes, we’re called wretches,  
We’re too lowly for the lords and all their servants;  
But we’re not afflicted by their lordly ailments.  
How they grunt and groan in town and country manor  
While the summer comes to cheer us with a visit;  
There’s one with his gout, he’s bawling loud and loutish,  
There’s another, how he bellows for a doctor!  
Ah, but why are rich men plagued by such afflictions?  
Why does death reap up the lords before their hour?  
It’s no riddle; scoffing at the chores of peasants,  
Lazy, shamming good, they overstuff their stomachs;



We, the serfs they scorn, our stomachs light with skimmings,  
Buttermilk and whey, we hurry-scurry briskly;  
With a snatch of bacon or Lithuanian sausage,  
We work better at the labors forced upon us." . . .

(from) THE AUTUMN'S RICHES

Again the sun abandons us, she trundles upward,  
Turns so soon and down the west she sinks so quickly!  
Daily dimming, she begrudges us her radiance,  
Daily longer, shadows yawn and stretch before us.  
Winds, in fits and starts, try out their wings and bellow,  
Forcing motes of warmth to scatter from their hideouts.  
Now the day, no longer tepid, growing chilly,  
Stirs old folk to wake and burrow for their sheepskins,  
Hustles wife and feebled goodman to the oven,  
Badgers those outdoors to slouch back to the cottage  
For the warmth of steaming soup and good hot victuals.

Earth, her every corner soggy, blubbers softly  
For our wheels slash through her washed-out back.  
Before, how smoothly two old horses dragged our load;  
Now, with four good horses struggling, we bog down,  
Wheel on axle, groaning, gags and, grinding, turns.  
Earth, besmirched, is churned and shattered into chunks,  
Fields in patches swim and splatter, drowning everywhere,  
Rain, splish-splashing, washes down the backs of folks,  
Bast shoes, stuffed in shabby boots, soak up the water,  
While they stomp and knead foul mud like dough.  
Ah, where are you now, you wondrous days of spring,  
When we, re-opening the windows of the cottage,  
Welcomed back your first warm flood of sunshine?  
Like a vision which, through sleep, we saw so surely  
Yet, on waking, shyly shared and barely mentioned,  
That was how the joy of summer passed away . . .

All that once, in celebrating summer, scurried,  
Fluttered through the fields and gaily hopping skittered,  
All that, swaying to and fro, rose to the clouds  
And joyously came down to share the grain and insect,  
All have gone, forsaken us, and fled to hiding.  
These old melancholy fields alone remain;  
Their loveliness is with us like a sunken grave . . .

(Demie Jonaitis)

. . . Don't we all know how we're born, with everyone naked,  
Slipperd Duke as well as us poor devils in sandals,  
Emperor the same as one of his shawl-covered subjects?  
Like the best-dressed gentleman, the beggar is born moronic  
And, no differently, he sucks on the breasts of a woman.  
Sir in silks and serf concealed by straw have to whimper  
Till the time when both at last start sensibly thinking.  
Whether little serf or master empties his bowels,  
One must wipe his bottom with a strip of linen,  
Then must wash his dirty diaper out in water . . .

Every man must make an effort even at gaping  
Once he's spiraled out of darkness into the daylight  
And when later, dreaming in the cradle, he hollers;  
Merely being born makes each one equally wretched.  
Next time heirs are tucked in, in their elegant trundles,  
While the kids in huts are shoved to shadowy corners  
Or, if swaddled, set in shabby straw for their bedding,  
Ask yourself if they themselves brought much of their riches.  
Of the gentry, not a one was born with his weapons,  
Nor has any newborn peasant ever delivered  
Parts for rakes, his wooden plow, or teeth for a harrow.  
Meeting peasants, highborn lords puff up with their pride like  
Globes of bacon fat afloat on leftover soupstock;  
But the wretched peasant, holey cap in his hands, stands  
Trembling by his empty stove for fear of their lightning

Or, from far away, bows low, respectfully stooping.  
God appoints a civil place for every person:  
Some, parading crests as awe-inspiring princes,  
Others, slogging through the muck as diggers of cowdung . . .

(Theodore Melnechuk)

(from) THE CARES OF WINTER

Ah, the winter's scowling wraths are already returning,  
And again the bristling north wind is flying to scare us.  
Look, how everywhere on pondwater panes are appearing  
Just as, in that house, a glazier is putting in windows.  
And the fishes' home, where bullfrogs saluted the summer,  
Puts its armor on, because of the quarrels of winter,  
Sending all its animals to sleep in the darkness.  
There, the northern wind has frightened the fields with its  
    scolding  
So that bogs and swamps are shrinking, contracting themselves to  
Stop the puddles of mud from their usual splashing and gurgling.  
Listen, how the road, when skipping wheels try to strike it,  
Rattles—having frozen—like a well-tightened snaredrum  
So resounding that its sound keeps echoing in you.  
Thus the world begins again to welcome the winter.

Well, I guess it's time: it won't be long till Christmas  
Holiday begins, and Advent wants to end by tomorrow.  
Fall, that elephant, too painfully annoyed us,  
Rudely spattering the mud it wallowed around in.  
All who had to put some shoes on, bast or wooden,  
Cursed the autumn for its works and its sloppy messes.  
Gentlemen, who fly around on splendid stallions,  
Going visiting each day in the finest of garments,  
Also cursed the filthy autumn when the mud splashed.  
Therefore all the people turned their faces northward,  
Most impatient for a winter of dryness, complaining.

Then, while everyone lamented, a glow started spreading;  
Soon, across the sky, the fluttering winds of the winter

Chased the stormy weather to the south, where the stork sleeps.  
 Later, thrusting out her head from the clouds, the winter  
 Quarreled like a shrew about the dungs of the autumn,  
 And, with frosts, she burned away its oozing labors;  
 Once she'd shoveled up the fall's manures, the winter  
 Built us all a road upon the horrible mudflats,  
 Teaching how to skate and fly again with sledges.  
 Now, where formerly we celebrated the springtime,  
 Gaily plucking for our use his herbs and his petals,  
 And where later warmer pleasures ended with summer,  
 There have risen drifts of snow with hillocks of whiteness,  
 And the flowers of the winter, that winter has woven.  
 It is wonderful to see how the forests of pinetrees  
 Show up everywhere, with curly crests, and bearded,  
 And, like powdered dandies, stand with elbows akimbo . . .

(1714-1780)

(Theodore Melnechuk)

### *Kristijonas Gotlibas Milke*

(from) THE CASTLE-HILL

As when foul weather holds the land,  
 The thieving jackdaws gather thick,  
 Fly swiftly from their hungry trees  
 To peaceful homes for safer food;  
 Thus came the gawking Germans down,  
 From all their lairs the Germans came,  
 Crossbearers\* riding in the lead,  
 To fight the peaceful Prussian\* men.  
 No battle this, unfair, uneven,  
 Crossbearers in their darkened armor,  
 Trained full for blood, clever in war,  
 Rode on in constant victory . . .

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\**Crossbearers*: Knights of the Teutonic Order who drove eastward in the 12th-15th centuries to wage prolonged wars against the Lithuanians. *Prussians*: *Prusi* or *Borussi*, a Baltic people living in so-called East Prussia, conquered and almost exterminated by the Teutonic Order in the 13th century. Not to be confused with the German inhabitants of the Prussian state.

Proud the armored Germans rode,  
And stopped. Could not defeat or pass  
The brave Lithuanians there,  
Alone against the armored foe.  
As when a gale shuts out the sky,  
And storms rage heavy in the land;  
When thunder roars so close above  
All beasts are frightened in the fields,  
And brushwood bends and tears apart  
While spruces fall like broken sticks,  
And firs and birches break in half  
As if axed down by hands of men;  
The great oak stands alone and brave,  
His branches spread invincible,  
His great roots deep in fertile earth.  
Thus stood the Lithuanians,  
Unbroken, unafraid, alone.  
Through fifty years they gathered stood,  
To battle still the German might.

(1736-1806)

(Dennis Lynds)

### *Dionyzas Poška*

(from) THE PEASANT OF SAMOGITIA AND LITHUANIA

Your fate is precious, yet it's held of little worth,  
Although your busy hands collect the fruits of earth.  
If I can not decrease your sorrows by my art,  
At least I'll make the world recall what grieves your heart.

O peasant, you defend the kings and monarchs, and  
You are the central beam on which their fortunes stand;  
You prop of rank, you barn of wealth, you ant of work,  
You don't know what it is to lie around and shirk!  
You feeder of all ages, whose purity is true,

Of courtesy the definition may be—you!  
You careful guardian of virtue's fatherhood!  
—These names, unlucky man, are yours to keep for good.

O peasant, benefactor of the world, why must  
You be as disregarded as the wind-blown dust? . . .

(1757-1830)

(Theodore Melnechuk)

### *Antanas Strazdas*

#### DAWN

Arisen, arisen,  
The morning star is up.  
The cock begins to crow.

Lark, lark,  
The morning meadow lark  
Dances on the wind and flies.

O sky,  
The lark clamors in the sky,  
Hens cluck in the pale yard.

The ox  
Bellows to the new fields,  
Kicks at the brown earth.

Lambs  
Prance through the morning  
Light, and play their dance.

And there!  
There past the dark trees,  
What is it glistens, rises?

Sun, sun,  
The sun is pure bright  
Gold on the awakened land.

Sun stirs  
The lark in high morning,  
The roses in the valleys.

Dew, dew,  
Wet, the delicate dew  
With the odor of green grass.

Fly, fly,  
The cuckoo cries in the tree,  
The dove coos in the air.

Run, run,  
The hare runs in the field,  
Alert ears crossed to listen.

Gone, gone,  
The evil time has gone.  
All is good and new.

(1763-1833)

(Dennis Lynds)

### *Simonas Stanevičius*

## THE HORSE AND THE BEAR

Where from of old the pure Nevėžis flows  
And lends its current to the Niemen's might,  
There on a summer's day the rising sun  
Filled hills with joy and waves with golden light.

A tethered horse was resting in the field,  
Musing upon his servitude and toil,  
How small his share of oats and brief his sleep,  
Till dawn dispelled the dew from the grassy soil.

"Soon I must rise and work," the horse complained,  
"And drag the wagon through the sun's hot rays,"  
When sudden terror put his thoughts to flight:  
A sight he had not seen now caught his gaze.



Down from the hill, across the winding path,  
Mid trunks and tree-stumps rotted by early rain,  
Swerving among the hazels on the lea,  
A bear drew near and trailed a broken chain.

"Fear not," said he. "No harm shall threaten thee.  
Between our fathers concord e'er remained,  
And now their sons endure a common plight:  
Thy feet are tethered and my neck is chained."

(1799-1848)

(Rafael Sealey)

### *Antanas Baranauskas*

(from) THE PINE GROVE OF ANYKSCIAI

. . . What fragrance! Here the resin of the pines,  
the scent of blossoms on the wind wafted!  
You recognize the clover in the meadow,  
both red and white; know camomile and thyme,  
herbs in the fallow fields; know the unique  
smell of the anthill, from its own black mound.  
From trees and their leaves, pine needles and cones,  
such wealth of perfumes! And each time the air  
stirs, it assails you with another scent.  
Cranberries bring the forest smell, with moss,  
and fragrant as an orchard in explosion,  
the branches flower. It is as if the forest  
breathed like a living creature! She exhales  
her odors through the meadows, and through meadows  
and fields, takes them again—in the pine groves  
the fertile plowlands are delectable:  
thus in the air, all woven, all diluted,  
the fragrances confound the nose itself!  
It is as if the meadows, fields and forest,  
in full agreement, should compound a precious  
perfume, and swing a censer to God's glory

in love and peace—it is like laughter, song,  
violin voices, cries of sorrow, all  
blended so perfectly, so well together  
that none is separable, and all meet  
in one whole, oh, as sadness takes the heart.

(Clark Mills)

Ah, but the sighs of the forest are lovely,  
It rustles and surges, rushes and questions;  
By midnight it reaches a stillness so silent  
You can hear the break of a bud into blossom,  
The holy word of each tree to its branches;  
Watchful, the stars glow, mournful, the dew falls.  
So peaceful the heart, it deadens the senses  
With prayer that lifts the spirit towards heaven.  
The light in the east at daybreak swells upward,  
The head of each plant, dew-heavy, bends lower;  
Into such silence, the forest awakens  
And slowly the day starts its holy discourse.

Who stirs? Just a leaf on the breath of a breeze,  
The eyes of a nestling suddenly opening.  
Who bustles? A wolf who, scenting the daylight,  
Skulks from his nightly hunt through the bushes;  
A fox seeks her hole, her teeth in a gosling,  
A badger crawls from his hideout and scurries,  
A doe in the pinegrove prances off merrily,  
A squirrel plunges from pinetree to pinetree,  
Here is an ermine, there is a marten,  
Myriads of animals, scampering, gamboling.

Who chatters? A woodpecker chips at a treetrunk.  
Bleats? A jacksnipe deep in the branches.  
Whispers? A hissing old snake on a woodstump.  
The stream of the river splashes and tumbles.  
Who gossips? Geese gather together to gaggle,  
The stork in his nest near the forest cackles.  
“Pry pry!” call the ducks flown off to the swampland;

The hoopoe questions his female and children,  
"What, what to bring you? That nonsense you jabber!  
What, what, what? Grain, flies or earthworms?"  
The cuckoo, clowning, inquisitive, chuckles  
Then mournfully groans and guffaws in his cuckooing.

The forest rings and resounds! The oriole  
Shrieks, "Eve, Eve, don't herd in the meadow!"  
The woodcock reels by the river: "Riu-riul!"  
What a rolling, trumpeting bedlam of voices,  
Each pressing and bursting with its own opinions—  
Goldfinches, thrushes, titnices, leafsingers,  
Magpies and jays, each alone in his music:  
They chuckle, and grieve, and rave with such nonsense!  
Soaring above them, the nightingale warbles,  
Full-throated, sonorous, aching sorrowful.  
He's changeful: he sighs in the thicket, yet glowingly  
Pierces the soul like the songs of Lithuania . . .

How wondrous, rare, the trees that once flourished,  
Some leafed without blossoms, some needled and flowering;  
Scholars there were who knowingly named them,  
But nameless they were to people who loved them . . .

Even in wastelands, our spirit is quickened  
By forests that live in the songs of our forefathers.  
Our parents, treasuring song like a vision,  
Were wakened: they planted this pinegrove and worried  
Each day as they watched the shoots of each seedling,  
Till flourishing pinetrees, thick as the rushes  
Gladdened young hearts and the spirit of children . . .

Then came the stomping; the Russian, a steward  
Surveying the forest, stationed his watchers;  
They rutted the roads, they routed out pickers  
Of mushrooms, they banned even grazing of cattle.  
Hard was their axe—in the dark of the forest—  
Nightly they hacked, they stealthily bartered,

Selling our trees, they swindled their masters.  
They silenced the grieving folk of Anykščiai  
With a fist in the mouth. They drove all the mourners,  
Year after year, to clean up the forest;  
They measured the waste that was gathered and sold it.

1 1 1

The hills are still rising, naked, stump-knotted,  
Tears wash them gently, song tells their story.  
Lone is one song, unfinished and silenced;  
The heart grown benighted, the soul darkly troubled,  
Are waiting. The force that devoured the forest  
Fell on the spirit—and broke off the song . . .

(1835-1902)

(Demic Jonaitis)

### *Antanas Vienažindys*

#### SWEET, HOW SWEET

Sweet, how sweet is heaven, and how far away!  
Can it be, dear God, You'll call me up some day?  
Shall I trudge no more on thorns, these paths of barbs?  
Shall I walk at last on pavements smooth with stars?

Shall I lose this load I carry pace by pace?  
Shall I have some rest and see Your holy face?  
Day by day goes by and it must come to pass  
You will pluck me from the earth like bending grass.

Highest Father, will you keep or let me go,  
Poor man, small man, wretch, the lowest of the low,  
Smoke, a handful, dust-mote that I've always been?  
Will Your mansions open, will You take me in?

(1841-1892)

(Demic Jonaitis)

*Petras Arminas*

HORSES

Horses, on a chilly day,  
Labored to pull home the hay.  
One suggested to the other,  
“Let’s upset the wagon, brother,  
In the puddle.” And with speed  
They performed the very deed!  
But I ask, what was the gain?  
Wet hay multiplied the strain.  
And the dripping, sodden load  
Left them wholly without food . . .  
For, to those who have not striven,  
Dear child, bread is never given.

(1853-1885)

(*Eloise Downer*)

*Adomas Jakštas*

THE DIPLOMAT

Here’s a fellow too discreet  
Even for the world to beat—  
Keeps the humble in their place,  
Spare the powerful his face;  
When permitted to attend them,  
Careful never to offend them:  
At their doors, polite and neat,  
Ears alert as tongue is sweet,  
Thoughtfully he leaves behind  
Cane and rubbers and his mind.

(1860-1938)

(*Theodore Melnechuk*)

## *Maironis*

### FROM BIRUTE MOUNTAIN

With an undulant surging of waves from the west,  
Let my torso be flooded with coldness, or me  
With the might that my heart will have gladly expressed  
When it's done so as grandly as you, Baltic Sea!

How I longed for you infinite! And, how I yearned  
To perceive the mysterious voices you gave  
Their release, only you understand, who have spurned  
Through the ages to silence the towering wave.

If you're sad, so am I! But I couldn't say why;  
All I ask is for hurricanes bellowing loud:  
Though they show me no peaceful oblivion, I  
Want the billows beside me as close as a crowd.

Want a friend to be closer: I trust him; he'll trace  
Like a tempest's the path of my torment-to-be;  
He'll keep it a secret as dark as his face  
And remain through the ages as restless as me.

(1862-1932)

(Theodore Melnechuk)

### THE LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS: EVENING

The limpid waters of the lake  
rocked, green emerald;  
and oarless, the light vessel swayed  
where the cool was wafted.

And indolent, the sun went down  
beyond the Alps; and Lucerne's bells  
offered to God on high the sparse  
labors of man and nature.

The leaf, still warm with sun,  
glittered with drops of dew.  
The mountain breathed a scent of roses  
redolent with health.

Peaceful, the golden reveries  
I wove in the dawn light;  
swiftly they flew, informed  
with grace, on the paths of sky.

The Milky Way was their starred guide  
as the heart went with them  
toward the remote, beloved  
land of the fathers.

What recollections, incidents  
that had once known life  
dawned and rose, one and then another  
beyond that dim frontier!

Vertical at the window ledges  
blossoms of pearl stare up,  
and in their caps of motley red  
turn multitudes of dahlias.

And from their childhood, maidens  
weave their braids with rue;  
the brother rears the dark bay colt  
for saddling in the fall.

Oh there, there flows wide  
the blue sash of Dubysal . . .  
O my tear, why do you slide  
down my cheek, like a pearl?

They flowed past—my most dear  
epochs of youth, now so  
remote, so long ago,  
one thinks they were but dreams.



What recollections, incidents  
that had once known life  
dawned and rose, one and then another,  
beyond that dim frontier!

(Clark Mills)

## SONG OF ANTIQUITY

Word is here, from as far as Vilnius: Saddle the steed.  
In Marienburg Teutonic knights move to destroy us.  
Goodbye, dear heart, my sister! Be still. Wait for me.  
If I not perish, I shall return, joyous.

A long time now, Teutons gather their precious wealth:  
gold spires, and chests of silk, soft to the feel.  
Dear love, you'll have a silk scarf and a belt of gold,  
and I, a Prussian sword of tempered steel.

Spring's dawn has broken, and the lark sings on forever.  
Where is my lad, my love? Why does he not return?  
At sunset there was battle. Blood poured down and wasted.  
My love fell for his homeland. And I mourn.

Ladies, companions, sing their joy, adorned in silks.  
My tears burst out and shine. I see the graveyard stand.  
Dearest one, you'll not speak small words of love to me,  
nor slip the golden ring on a white hand.

(1862-1932)

(Clark Mills)

### *Motiejus Gustaitis*

## A VOW

I made myself a vow  
Never to walk these ways,  
And yet I walk them now,  
Forgetting bitter days;  
And I shall often tread  
Where my bare feet have bled.

Again in my tired heart  
Gathers a storm of flame.  
But have I not known smart?  
And is despair a name?  
No mailed tomorrow's light  
Can put this storm to flight.

But listen! Ghostly bells  
Come winging from my soul.  
Their shadow-music swells;  
Up to the stars they toll.  
And through the singing air  
Fall dews to still despair.

(1870-1927)

(W. K. Matthews)

### *Jurgis Baltrušaitis*

#### THE RUSTLING OF HAIR-GRASS

Greet the tender grassblades by your path, and listen  
While the clay-sprung grass that's fine as hair will whisper,  
Whisper to your heart, which seems so hard of hearing,  
"You and I, to time eternity, are equal . . ."

For Almighty Father God has so arranged that,  
Since you both accepted as your destination  
Modest earth, you're halves of an equation: riddles  
Both: in bloom and ashes, comparable miracles . . .

Catch this living knowledge, let your eyes be opened,  
And from then on you will draw your dwindling moment  
From forever—and not have to split the empire  
Of the world to muddy earth and starry heaven . . .

(1873-1944)

(Theodore Melnechuk)

*Pranas Vaičaitis*

SONG OF THE ROISTERER

Every tomcat has his she-cat,  
Every gander has his she-goose,  
Every gentleman his lady,  
Every hired hand his she-maid.  
I, a man, an oak, a model,  
I must have my brandy bottle.

She-cats always beat their tomcats,  
She-geese pluck the ganders' feathers,  
She-girls make a butt of fellows,  
Ladies ridicule their lordships.  
Me—I'm lucky. Always handy,  
Always true—a friend, my brandy.

In my pocket will I lug it—  
How I'll fondle it and hug it!  
Out the stopper—and I savor  
Brandy of the finest flavor.  
Then this breast glows all the lighter,  
All my wits spark up the brighter.

Oh were Nemunas, our river,  
Wise as it is venerable,  
And today, with pity for us,  
Spilled out every drop of water—  
Filled up to the brim with brandy,  
Flowing, glowing just with brandy!

Then, O joyous days, the hubbub!  
Then what luck, the cheers, the glut-up:  
Far-off folk and beasts, all yearning,  
Fish and birds in haste, all journeying  
To the Nemunas to tipple  
Brandy gurgling in each ripple!

Beasts would drink and roar and bellow,  
Hoot and dance—each maid and fellow!  
Fish leap high so they could dive in:  
What a drink to be alive in!  
Joyous, all would hop, a-swigging;  
Earth itself would joggle, jiggling.

(1876-1901)

(Demie Jonaitis)

### *Mykolas Vaitkus*

#### THE MORNING HOUR

The pale dawn rises slowly  
From mists not yet disbanded;  
Its face is like an angel's,  
All grave as it is candid.  
Light streaks the cloudy gauzes  
With woof of silver metal;  
A great rose blooms and scatters  
Pink petal after petal.  
And soon the sun is climbing  
In golden-bannered glory,  
As pure and fresh as lilies,  
As innocence in story.  
He stares in naked wonder  
At swarms of wandering creatures,  
As if he saw them newly,  
And they saw alien features.  
The green earth sings his praises,  
The air is bright with cheeping;  
But he grows hot with passion  
That breaks in tears of weeping.

(1883- )

(W. K. Matthews)

### *Liudas Gira*

#### ASTERS

Out there beside the garden wall  
I glimpse belated asters blowing;  
Yet I don't mourn the summer's going

Or weep the ruin of the fall.  
Out there beside the garden wall  
I glimpse belated asters blowing.

The sky's blue heart-compelling gladness  
That only yesterday was ours,  
Laughing the laughter of the flowers,  
Clouds over now with ashen sadness.  
The asters too will soon cease blowing  
Out there beside the garden wall;  
Yet I don't mourn the summer's going  
Or weep the ruin of the fall.

Each heart of us, while time's foot ranges,  
Suffers the season's colored changes.  
When first love wakes in sudden glory,  
Spring characters her fragrant story;  
Then an intense delight enthralls us  
As summer's golden trumpet calls us;  
And when pain mars our patterned pleasure  
Our days are telling autumn's measure.

Out there beside the garden wall  
I glimpse belated asters blowing;  
Yet I don't mourn the summer's going  
Or weep the ruin of the fall.

(1884-1946)

(W. K. Matthews)

### *Kleopas Jurgelionis*

#### SEA AND WENCHES

While the maidens were raking the hay,  
I stood apart on the sea-shore.  
Splendor of the sea, the girls aglow,  
And my heart so restless.

The white waves of the sea arising,  
Bright with splashing silver.  
The girls' yellow braids in the breeze  
Sparkled like amber.

As the southwestern blew stronger,  
The sea rose in its roaring force.  
The girls at their raking, now grabbed  
By the wind, I called closer to me.

And as the sea in all its wild roaring  
Kept lashing me with the foam,  
I managed to gather beside me  
Both sea and glittering wenches!

(1886- )

(George Reavey)

### *Petras Vaičiūnas*

#### HAY MOWING

Silent haze rests low on fields.  
Pale the gold sun through pines.

The scythers move, man after man.  
Down in drops, the morning dew.

Young the grass, green the grass.  
Scythes ring clear, scythes cut.

Meadow flowers, bow your heads—  
Young girl rakers pass your way.

God guide your hand! Thank you, thank you!  
Swaths like a field of many snakes.

Scythe drives scythe across the day.  
Row on row the grass lies cut.

Day sings, grass waves, scythes ring  
In green meadow and past the woods.

At field's edge, girls glitter.  
Laughter and words—a festive morning!

Sun high, sun hot, breasts hot,  
Green meadows, green the mowing.

(1890-1960)

(Dennis Lynds)

*Faustas Kirša*

THE WOODEN CHRIST

In his fathers' home, a farmer who's a hundred  
Carves a wooden model Lord that works some wonders.

On the face of Jesus he inscribes his misery  
When they sent his son to prison in Siberia.

He cuts deep, the wood dust drops, the god doll gazes—  
Anguished god indeed, created by its maker.

He, to crucify himself his heart and torments,  
Spears the side of God and spikes the palms and insteps.

Then he twists a crown of thorns to grave the forehead;  
White the wood the old man gouges, goads and tortures.

With the hands at rest upon the knobby kneecaps,  
Wooden Christ himself is born, alive, and painwracked.

Chips pile up to ease the heart, for Christ is risen,  
Christ himself is risen from the old man's chisel.

Now the godwright glows, and now he sees the miracle:  
Round the head of Christ are lightrays in a circle.

When he stripped the final splinter from the icon,  
You could hear the lips of the creator speaking:

"God, I don't believe this piece of wood requires  
Labor out of me to bring about a miracle.

"God, you wipe my tears dry, turn my pain to sweetness  
Through your agony with both your temples bleeding.

"If you do perform them—miracles, I beg you:  
Save the innocent, but punish persecutors!"

And, when he had borne the statue to the church, why  
All the people of the land returned to virtue.

And, his lips against the wound of Jesus' passion,  
He himself begged mercy for his youth's transgressions.

(1891- )

(Theodore Melnechuk)

### *Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas*

#### AT MIDNIGHT

There is a single hour that comes  
amidst the night  
when to the fixed white stars your prayers  
take soundless flight.

How limpid, endless in itself,  
lies radiant space,  
as if the stars moved, in your heart,  
each to its place.

In those blue vaults, all that has being,  
out, up, and down!  
Through their immense expanses, you  
dissolve and drown.

Now prayer and sanctity have gone,  
nor is there sin.  
Oh, let the avid heart speak out:  
Heaven will win.

(1893- )

(Clark Mills)

#### THE SORROW-LADEN\*

My own dear God, how luminous the nights!  
To what a height towers the wide firmament!  
And stars, the stars! Immense and small, they glisten  
and even that, my own dear God, is sorrowful.

---

\**Rupintojėlis*, "The Sorrowful One," is a small wood sculpture of Christ carved by the village "godmakers." It presents Christ seated and leaning on his elbow; he looks down at the passers-by. Such figures usually stood at crossroads, either in a tree or within a small wooden "house" or "chapel" set upon a pole.



I told myself, I'll walk the level highway,  
the even road of wide free will and freedom,  
the even road that opens through a night  
radiant for the reveries of the youthful.

But why, my own dear God, why, why do you  
lean by the open road and wait in sorrow?  
By the road where the veriest of sorrows  
drift alone through the days, and sigh and wander?

O sorrow-laden, ever watchful, grant me  
these reveries by the road awhile this evening  
—as high in heaven, radiant stars so glitter  
that even this, my own dear God, is sorrowful.

(1893-     )

(Clark Mills)

### *Kazys Binkis*

#### THE WATER-LILY

Upon a reed-pond in a meadow,  
Like moonlit snow all pale and gleaming,  
Once bloomed a silver water-lily,  
Upon a reed-pond in a meadow . . .  
Sunshine or rain, it lay there stilly,  
Speared in with reed-shafts, deeply dreaming,  
Upon a reed-pond in a meadow,  
Like moonlit snow all pale and gleaming.

(W. K. Matthews)

#### CLOUD-CALVES

Spring trickles into the meadows,  
Only at dawn, small puffs of cold,  
About the barns of heaven  
wander the little cloud-calves.

From sheepskin coat draw forth your soul.  
Into the winds, free, let her go.  
And let her tend, milk-rich there,  
the herd of clouds in air.

(1893-1942)

(Clark Mills)

### *Balys Sruoga*

(from) KAZIMIERAS SAPIEGA

Look at me, people! Do you recognize me?  
I am warlord of Lietuva, and palatine  
of Vilnius, my name known through all Europe.  
Planted secure in my immense possessions  
I stand before you, hatless, like a child,  
afraid to lift my eyes up to the sky!  
Look at me! I, a gray old man, slashed  
in battles throughout all my life. And I  
bow down to earth before you. And I tremble  
for fear time will not give me time to tell  
all that my anguished land, on Golgotha,  
whispered into my heart . . .

Except in nobles, I could not see man.  
Through their eyes I did see my country's plains;  
hammered Lietuva's fortune with their swords.  
—They were insipid, bitter, unsubstantial  
as foam on a beaker of mead that bubbles, blankets  
the juices: skim that foam to find the sweetness  
—they were the froth on a swift-running stream  
that sucks into itself the surface refuse  
and covers the pure depths below where, azure,  
the sky repeats itself . . .

Oh, no! It was the Lietuva of nobles  
that died, not ours. She has survived the winter's  
rigors and roars out, now, like spring singing.  
Refuse and foam rejected from her shores,  
a spirit will arise! And with a thunder

that sounds and echoes down the Uralian forests,  
past the Carpathian crests, and to the Elbe.  
—I go now to Lietuva in her winter.  
I'll stand at crossroads like a crucifix;  
at giants' graves I'll toll nightlong, like bells  
—that thus, in bitterest cold, in a heavy cloak,  
the heartbeat of Lietuva should not falter . . .

(1896-1947)

(Clark Mills)

### *Juozas Tysliava*

#### THE WAGON

Four gray wheels and two bay horses  
Hasten up the hill;  
A man's years are not accustomed  
Ever to stand still.

Sunshine gilds the beasts and wagon,  
Wheels and hoofs cut weeds;  
Through the world speed on fleeting  
A man and his steeds.

Whirling winds whine, wail and whistle  
From a mountain bare:  
Is that you, O Fortune, Fortune,  
Standing headless there?

Four gray wheels and two bay horses  
Speed the human load,  
Up and down the all-observant  
Silent serpent-road.

(Nadas Rastenis)

### *Juozas Tysliava*

#### SPRING

The last day of April made her bed,  
As whole forests of cloud, capsizing, swayed in the West.  
With a moonbeam knife the night sliced  
The loaf of the sky, porous with stars.

No herd of wild mustangs neighed in the prairies,  
No Mississippi in flood swept away the towns;  
A windmill, urged by the southwestern, rose like Christ,  
A windmill grinding grain on another planet.

Filtering bird songs through a filter silence,  
The thunder of Spring will reverberate before cock-crow:  
May the birds then worship me like a lord,  
At whose command the earth trembles from morning till night.

(1902-1961)

(George Reavey)

### *Stasys Santvaras*

#### MAYBUG

Maybug, tell me the labors you perform.  
As light fills the dark valley and the land  
where will you wade in the wet sand,  
after the storm?

Where were you born? In cherry blossoms? In a tear  
of sun was your clear variegated garment made?  
What are your duties, maybug, in the shade  
of this dark valley here?

(1902- )

(Clark Mills)

### *Jonas Aistis*

#### SAINT SEBASTIAN

I trembled; eyes uplifted, I deplored  
That agony might break my will at last—  
One arrow here, the first to strike, O Lord,  
And all that dread anxiety has passed.

I feel the fall of warmth and gentleness,  
Drop after drop on me; my joints melt, while  
Upon my vigil falls the far-off smile  
Of my Redeemer coming, luminous.

Almighty, gloried be! I thought, so long,  
This moment I would need a will that's strong.  
Instead, You come towards me . . . O Lord, your light—.

I cannot look, I'm blinded like the dead.  
The vaults ring, jubilant with gentle might.  
—I cannot lift my sinking, leaden head.

(*Demie Jonaitis*)

## PHEDRA

That evening, rivers overflowed!  
Their banks did not hold space enough.  
Carefree, the sun departed past the sea  
on a golden bridge.

That evening, no ship foundered—gulls  
silenced their sorrowful cry,  
and it was joy, that streamed and flowed  
transparent—yes, joy flowed.

That evening the white Pleiades drew pearls  
through the high vault of heaven—  
the bed of the river didn't even hope  
for the joyous, brimming waters to return.

That evening, gay and endless,  
the kings of fairy-tales caroused;  
and on the mountain crest, with snows radiant,  
no eagle came to rest.

That evening, the treasury aired itself;  
wine rained—and goblets broke!  
Joyous, the cranes returning  
leaned forward to the north.

That evening, organs uttered their full sound:  
*Magnificat anima mea—*  
as if a wind of grace out of the west  
should stroke the shore of a sea.

That evening and my footsteps and this joy  
met and were perfectly identical . . .  
That evening, as had never been, each leaf  
was drenched and washed in joy.

(Clark Mills)

## OF AUTUMN AND A DOG

Beyond the forest and the fields,  
past the blue seas and their white foam,  
a step-mother drove a princess out,  
drove her away from home.

Autumn. And rain. A dog howled there,  
his cries muffled and few.  
And the princess' locks were fair  
and her eyes, flax-flower blue.

And there was no one, none to care  
about the hound or the princess.  
Only a birch in the blown rain  
uttered a world's distress:

Beyond the forest and the fields,  
past the blue seas and their white foam,  
a step-mother drove a princess out,  
drove her away from home.

(1904- )

(Clark Mills)

## *Salomėja Nėris*

### DANDELION

Dandelion, dandelion, flower miracle,  
why do you lean on wind at the field's edge?  
Where, where will you lay your white head down?  
And where drowse, as the late evening darkens?

Wind rises, blows, tousles the locks  
and tears the white locks from the snowy head:  
over the faultless earth, autumnal field,  
carries the dandelion's fluffed white seedlets.

Dandelion, dandelion—oh, my own flower!  
I grieve now for your little head bleached white  
as I grieve for my new youth, so scattered  
by time and wind, at the field's edge.

Could I but change into the field's gray sand,  
could I but lie still in the deep of earth!  
Could I but settle slowly, cold as stone,  
the Nemunas above me flowing, flowing . . .

(Clark Mills)

## LILACS

A time before I could be.  
These lilacs bloomed.  
Soon, again nothing of me.  
They will bloom on.  
From sun, from wind,  
their petals fall,  
strewn like sand  
over my all.

(1904-1945)

(Mary Phelps)

## *Antanas Rimydis*

## FAMINE

The earth is piled high with saccharin tablets,  
And their drifts envelop the roads.  
Hard frost stalks about,  
Crumbling the rail track.  
A rail quivers and squeaks.  
A wolf sits between the rails,  
Howling like a wolf,  
A famished wolf.  
He begs for his food till the telegraph wires wail . . .

Perhaps, at his post in some distant station,  
A sleepless telegrapher  
May receive the wolf's telegram:  
All the bells are booming in my head,  
And famine's violin plays in my heart.

(1905- )

(George Reavey)

### *Antanas Miškinis*

#### LIKE SNOW, LIKE MUSIC

Like snow, like music, and like blossoms,  
All things on earth, like echo, fade away;  
And so does the youth of twenty, burning  
To set the seven seas aflame.

Our dream was to improve the world,  
Create a vast, immortal happiness.  
Such was our thought, but little we suspected  
That we had irrevocably lost the way.

How do they feel, I wonder, who have the knack of living  
Or reposing on the seashore near white villas?  
But what can I sing now when the heart  
Is tired, disillusioned, almost? . . .

Do the seas, the springtime, and the cherries  
In blossom, astonish us no more?  
I know too well where we are going,  
Where we are floating, and what it is we seek . . .

Like snow, like blossoms, and like women,  
All things assume a gradual pallor:  
Like a willow stranded on a hill, bent  
All day long by winds, one stands alone.

(1905- )

(George Reavey)



*Antanas Vaičiulaitis*

SUMMER

They come, the holy days.  
And on the slope of pines  
mild currants, raspberries  
have flushed and darkened.

You whisper to me from what lips today  
your warmth awakens,  
and drowned in lucid silence,  
ache of nostalgias dozes.

(1906- )

(Clark Mills)

*Bernardas Brazdžionis*

IMAGE OF THE FUTURE

Like a moss-bee, as evening wanes,  
our life will take flight back to the hive, the song  
already fallen still, the white frost still and fallen.  
Like God's thoughts, we shall gather at the threshold.

On gray moss in a pine wood, her heart turned gray,  
youth tearful for her prayers astray will find redress in heaven.  
And you, beloved, in one night perhaps grown gray with me,  
blossoms of peony no longer in your cheeks . . .

Thus we shall see ourselves in distant firelight,  
and for ourselves, from shadows, raise the ruined ancestral home.  
Till the sun gutters, flowers the sphere, the ring gold as a grape  
and we shall see our first love, veiled in white, walk past us.

Potentates will bestow their wealth and palaces,  
and queens, their emeralds and pearls.  
In your name, Jesus, in the pastoral game of death,  
our sweetest shield, our paradisaal consolation.

And priests and sisters, walled in their cold stone,  
and noble hierarchs and low-born servants  
wandered from moonlight into moonlight,  
O Lord, and have not found the path to your domain.

Towards it, the echo ever by our side, through fields,  
towards it, one dry juniper needle in our hands,  
bare-headed and without adornment, we shall travel  
along the ice-locked way of All Souls' Day.

The rivulet of mystery will burst out of the mountain.  
Our souls will bow down, tired, drink their fill, recover,  
more azure than the opal of the rainbow  
garlanded in the holy herbs of the high feast.

Forget man's vain preoccupations, his wish to forget,  
his promises to you, earth, not to die—and many, oh many dreams!  
For darkness falls, the ship appears already and the waves  
crash, as without rest I draw near our Father's haven.

*(Clark Mills)*

## JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

My sister told me, "You are not my brother."  
My brother told me, "You are not my brother."  
Where can I find a sister—where, a brother,  
Who am, to sister and to brother, alien?

High up the Alps, deep-chasmed in the snows,  
St. Bernard's chapel hunches, hoar with years.  
A cold and lonely toller nods beside the bell  
And, sleeping, dreams an angel, lowering, awoke him.

He walks now, searching for me—downhill: through night  
And day, through wind and snowdrift, thaws and freezing.  
He seems to brush my brow—his good soft hand upon me;  
He seems to touch my face—my heart he quickens.

Here below, my heart will sleep. Above, awaken. Its sun obscured,  
Its beating stilled, this heart had verged on death.  
Through fog—a tale: all, all is a trek through fog. And life itself  
Ascends through fog—a journey into night.

(Demie Jonaitis)

## COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

A man spoke in the street  
once, at my window, from his heart,  
his word a phrase that I repeat:  
*Commedia dell'arte.*

—Life weighs a full 100 tons.  
Heavy as sailors' laughter: Ha. Ha. Ha.  
Heavy, as great as, from the VIth Station, once,  
the scarf of Saint Veronica.

Some die refined, as if to nod—  
and others croak like dogs, too soon, unblessed,  
without bought exequies, or God . . .  
*Missa est.*

(1907- )

(Clark Mills)

## *Antanas Gustaitis*

### THE PIG

Men dethrone the reigning dog;  
Man is toppled by his wife;  
At the summit, though, the pig  
Wears the diadem for life.

Be it Lent or time for meat,  
Sow makes citizenry swine,  
Fills His Excellency's seat,  
Takes Milady's place in line.

Pig the concubine of pigs  
Grunts in windows, waddles out,  
Falls asleep on moneybags,  
Roots the heart up with her snout.

Now she's served upon a platter,  
Aromatic, roasted brown;  
From a pedestal, she'll later  
Impudently stare you down.

In the glade sing nightingales;  
Stars are pale; the east is pearled;  
Dressed in ticking, dressed in tails,  
Pig parades across the world.

And you dream: as if on top  
Of your brow, the bristles grew  
Till, in gardens rooted up,  
Grunting pigs included you.

(1907- )

(Theodore Melnechuk)

### *Gražina Tulauskaitė*

#### UNKNOWN BIRD

Now nobody returns,  
Nobody sings.  
Only pale clouds  
Exchange kisses in the mountains.

Now music is gone,  
The bells are asleep.  
I rise every day  
To silence.

I know I loved  
Though I was unloved.  
Life flies by in darkness  
Like an unknown bird.

(1908- )

(Jean Reavey)

*Antanas Jasmantas*

ANNUNCIATION

We waited too, like you; in every grain  
Of glittering sand, we saw Him. Day complete,  
The sun descended while the shadows came,  
And lay like lambskins gathered at our feet.

Night falls. For us, the desert's glow will die,  
A curtain veil the stage, a darkness swell.  
Will He who, during sowing time, stopped by  
To call on you, now visit us as well?

The small gate, swinging, creaks as though it's been  
Ajar—now someone on the path slips past  
And, droning, shimmers like a veil that's cast  
Across some golden world. But who's come in?

Ah—a bee—that coming home this day  
Has, in the gathering darkness, lost its way.

(1908-     )

(Demie Jonaitis)

*Henrikas Radauskas*

THE WINTER'S TALE

Guess what smells so. . . . You didn't guess.  
Lilies? Lindens? No. Winds? No.  
But princes and barbers smell so,  
The evening smells so, in a dream.

Look: a line goes through the glass  
Bending quietly; and the hushed  
Light, in the tender mist,  
Is gurgling like a brook of milk.

Look: it's snowing, it's snowing, it's snowing.  
Look: the white orchard is falling asleep.  
The earth has sunk into the past.  
Guess who's coming. . . . You didn't guess.  
Princes and barbers are coming,  
White kings and bakers,  
And the trees murmur, covered with snow.

*(Randall Jarrell)*

## ARROW IN THE SKY

I am an arrow that a child shot through  
An apple tree in bloom beside the sea;  
A cloud of apple blossoms, like a swan,  
Has shimmered down and landed on a wave;  
The child is wondering, he cannot tell  
The blossoms from the foam.

I am an arrow that a hunter shot  
To hit an eagle that was flying by;  
For all his strength and youth, he missed the bird,  
Wounding instead the old enormous sun  
And flooding all the twilight with its blood;  
And now the day has died.

I am an arrow that was shot at night  
By a crazed soldier from a fort besieged  
To plead for help from mighty heaven, but  
Not having spotted God, the arrow still  
Wanders among the frigid constellations,  
Not daring to return.

*(Theodore Melnechuk)*

## APOLLO

His profile, grave and fine, can sever  
Like sharpest sword. Do you not hear?  
Apollo passed this way. For ever  
The echo of his lyre—as clear

And crystalline as glass—resounds  
Through all our hushed and chambered space,  
And here still, in the cruel bounds  
Of night—the frozen marble face!  
And I must sing the tired old lays  
Of men beyond their earthbound ways.

The sky is crossed by swallow routes,  
The heath is gay with dancing flutes,  
And on that scene the sun bestows  
The flush that women wear, the rose.  
And I must sing the age-old lays  
Of men beyond their earthbound ways.

(*Astrid Ivask*)

## THE SUN, THE MOON AND THE STAR

The cabaret star Viola d'Amore (Violet Dam), who has never heard of Vivaldi, comes onto the stage clad in fishscales and smoke, in a cloud heated by applause and drinks, in a halo of oil stocks. Transformed into a shriek, which extinguishes the mirrors' lights, she seizes the thick beam of the spotlight with both hands, in her dread of falling. The sun and the moon in the sky above pray for her, concerned over her fate.

(1910- )

(*Henrikas Radauskas*)

### *Antanas Škëma*

## FIRST REQUEST

As one star falls, others remain aloft.

They soar and await their fall.

A man dies, and the others say:

"Thank God! It isn't I."

A frog croaks in a marsh, her head thrown back  
—the dog lowers his own.

(He cannot seize the frog.)

When oranges ripen in the south, the Arctic boulders  
feel naked without moss.

And in a glass a woman gazes at herself:

"What color should I dye my hair, now it is gray?"  
she asks her wrinkles.

Stars, people, frogs, dogs, oranges, moss, perhaps  
you will explain the sense of things to me.

(1911-1961)

(*Maricjo Fonsale*)

### *Leonardas Zitkus*

#### LOVE UNSPOKEN

In her arms it was I, my mother lifted.  
The pendulum swung, slow and free.  
I raised my eyes, the hand of the clock shifted.  
The east held up the sun for me.

I rose towards her in the slow, singing hours,  
my love unsaid through all the past—  
so slow, the endless opening of flowers! . . .  
The pendulum sways fast, too fast.

(1914- )

(*Clark Mills*)

### *Juozas Kėkštas*

#### MAIOLI BLOOMS WITH POPPIES

Maioli flowers with death and blood, Maioli blossoms  
with blood-red poppies. Mountains, meadows bloom with blood.  
Corpses in long rows. In this common place of rest  
lie Frenchman, Englishman, Hindu, Greek, Italian, Pole.

(The fallen have forgotten all; aware of nothing  
and lucky, do not hear the friend's moans—crash of shells.  
San Angelo, Monte Cassino, Albanetta, Cairo  
perished ephemeral as dreams, as they themselves.)



Bridges down, markers gone, the roads we march  
to Rome burst into rubble, smoke and dust  
that choke the nightingales and cherry-flowering orchards.  
Your tired legs buckle and the nights weigh black,  
but friend, luckless as I, do not trip, do not fall!

We do not need cantatas, anthems, pathos, lies.  
Our deaths, our lives are shoddy. We could no longer wait  
—no longer dear, our errant leisure. Night's Pompeii  
requires another end. Thus not to live, but to die here,  
we bear the lava of the war Vesuvius on tank and rifle.

With death and blood Maioli flowers, and with poppies.  
In blood red as the poppies we inscribe strange history  
and in our dreams of freedom, shout: *Libertà vedi e muori.*

(1915- )

(Clark Mills)

### *Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas*

#### A L'OMBRE DES JEUNES FILLES EN FLEUR

Cold sprays of lilac melted,  
and in the frail drugged evening  
vaguely somehow disquieted—of what?—  
we trembled, as the doors would quarrel in fifths  
and octaves—and then suddenly  
we heard their voices palpable as flame:  
*And they call us!* And as if we had penetrated  
sign and enigma of their bodies' contour,  
each night, fell into nightlong dreams  
of archipelagoes and their strange islands,  
joyous processions, bent, narrow streets.  
And with hands unawakened,  
played with the pure sand of the amphitheatre  
of their configured waists and haunches.  
Our reveries adorned them  
with fair hair, russet lashes,

profiles of cameos, lethal gowns  
and hands that shone like soundless crystal.  
Now we feared only their strange fragrance,  
motion and form, like those of vessels.

In the orchard, gathered under trees,  
we would play, as we listened  
to plashing water that unclothed us,  
timid, always regretful, why they didn't  
leave us and run away.

Then by pure chance our glances came together  
eye to eye. We would run, startled,  
and not know why. —And afterward  
for a long time, avoided home. Or there,  
wandered from room to room, loitered at doors  
and paused at mirrors—we who had learned all  
the hermetic curves and labyrinthine bodies.  
Our dread, the smile of walls and windows  
and of the mother. Strange, her gentle rustling!  
. . . Unable now to silence in ourselves  
the sure voice of the tree of knowledge.

(Clark Mills)

## INFERNO

*Leave all despair, who enter here.*

(Comte de Lautréamont)

To. J. G.

Through dark streams of the cerebral complex I penetrate a season  
that was not in the world,  
gray-horizoned, with ardent trees  
(like ours, their roots more powerful than their trunks),  
where my friend Hermes, the Aurora Gate in his eyes, sings the  
sheen of your hair,  
and sun—the scarlet domino of the carnival of our time—  
fixed in green polar ice, listens to him.

The bells of the Virgin's month that toll (under the earth);  
the Mystical Rose, my Mystical Rose, Queen of Immaculate Time  
(under the earth), meet us.

Wild birds that would each autumn wrench us from dark-haired  
shadowy places;

fatherly errant parabolas of the familiar shadows of the rooms of  
youth

and of the closing wooden doors,

parabolas that filled the evenings of the departed, meet us (under  
the earth).

Thus my arrival at a melancholy town.

A saint, his hand somewhat corroded, stops me, cries: "You know  
—here's Inferno!"

Yes! This journey's not my first. And in my mind's eye rises

The First Circle: Shannon, the waiter from Perpignan, and the  
doomed, with ciphers on their faces.

But I go forward. I do not turn back.

A street of dust under my feet,

I see this woman, joyous—it may be, my mother.

At the rotten parapet of the bridge I find again, as in the mirror  
in my native home, Yvonne de Galais who waits, her hair  
mournfully fair;

she tells me that *The Memory of Mortefontaine*, in velvet dark-  
ness, sleeps like a pearl that glimmers

—the full red moon drowned in the veins of a tree.

Wrapped close about the house, but dry already lies the river.  
Only the lake has grown still more, both from sorrow and rain.  
With keener glance, one glimpses in the water the outline of  
a church, like a drowned man, snail- and weed-bedecked.

I put my ear to the earth. I listen.

Clad in their small white shirts, the choir of moles continue with  
their singing:

In your world only the ironic forms of recollections live

—Eumenides, the world has died, your God exists no more.

Beside the yellow churchyard gate, in a Soutine-red jacket, stands  
a young drummer.

Girls, their breasts quite hidden,

their bodies formless, and as if they had been mothers long before,  
lead forth a faceless bride, in whose still childlike flesh we see a  
numerous family and a wooden table.

This is the Last Supper. The last bread and water.

A dry Garden of Gethsemane rustles beyond the pane.

In small white shirts, alas, the moles' choir sings the hitherto  
joyless *Epithalamium*.

Faces. Bells. Faces. Bells.

And a beggar bird, his cap on his knees.

He would stand up as we approach, but leaves, wind-driven, close  
our eyes, and he vanishes without a word.

In her body we find the silhouette of a ruined house.

Diligent as a little shepherd, a gray worm, that has constructed  
something with great care in the antechamber, starts.

He opens the door and, his face covered with tears, leads me into  
the room. There in the middle of the floor lies in pieces in  
a broken mirror my face.

Behind the table sit the brothers. But they no longer know me.

Across the floor scurries the mouse from Gorki's book,  
the one that we would once have raised into a horse  
to ride into more light. That, God did not allow.

Thus we remained, our hope of liberation smothered  
in wretchedness—to us senseless, to others, sanctified.

Mother sits by the wall and thinks, perhaps, how every spring my  
father dreamed of sailing-ships and winds.

Then suddenly she lifts her eyes, and says,

"You didn't bring us God?"

No. I could not find Him anywhere.

Still, my wish is to console them (you will rise again);  
but the worm outside the door resumes the song,  
and I, who understand that the joy of oblivion has been, for them,  
still greater than their hope for eternal being,  
I burn for a long time with a bizarre illusion,  
that, dead, I shall call up my sleeping angels from the sand, and  
in time's distant reaches overtake the angel of Bellini

who bears on his enormous wings their bodies up to God,  
and thus after a hard struggle, bring lost paradise to them  
—heavens that open simply to the key of iron, and the footprint's  
echo upon the earth.

(1920- )

(Clark Mills)

### *Kazys Bradūnas*

#### THE WOODSPRITE'S LAMENT

Oh, who has felled you,  
dear oak, my oak?  
Who withered your green-feathered crest?  
Alien, heartless gods?  
Or bloodless hands?

I, I have failed you,  
dear oak, my oak.  
I did not shield you with my care.  
In damp mists, in the autumnal night,  
souls of the forefathers must lose their way.  
Alas, your branches will not sough together  
now, nor your leaves flare.

(Clark Mills)

#### THAT YOU NOT BE ALONE

I scrubbed the windowpane  
Near your cradle  
That stars should rise,  
And risen, shed faint light,  
That you not be alone,  
Through the night alone.

I shall sway like a willow  
By the level road  
That a bird should settle,  
And settled, sing,  
That you not be alone,  
On the journey alone.

Up the sad hill I'll go with you,  
Like sand I'll flow away  
That the wind should blow me,  
And blowing, lull you asleep,  
That you not be alone,  
In the earth alone.

(Jean Reavey)

## CRYSTAL

The flowering of the lindens  
is over. Honey-gathering's done.  
And in the granaries  
of tillers of the earth  
only a smell of wax remains.

Shorter the days. Colder  
the time of work. And in the hot palm,  
of the salt of sweat, only  
a small crystal.

(1917- )

(Clark Mills)

## *Vytautas Mačernis*

### THE SECOND VISION

There is on earth a place of home  
where the dawn breaks with miracles,  
where cocks out of the past chant their longing  
and where the farmer's footsteps  
echo about the house.

I bend down and I watch—  
my head turns with the fragrances of maple wet with dew.  
Far away lie the fields that grow  
only the fair-hued rye,  
far from the dirt and rumors of the streets.

And suddenly I hear  
in the wide shimmer of clear distances  
a shepherd's pipe, the lilt and song, move towards me.  
And I know that a shepherd holds a reed  
between his fingers, piping down the riverside,  
and like a restless river  
that winds through marshes and the blue of forests,  
the soft notes pierce the center of the heart.

Thus in a trance of joy I hear  
the reed, the simple song  
waken the lea and valley fresh from sleep  
and see, somewhere, the dark night leave the earth,  
its heavy sorrow buoyant as the mist.  
The black bats flicker back to shadows under roofs,  
their dread the morning light.

—I walk with my desires for the earth  
to burn and flame again, with visions.

(1920-1944)

(Clark Mills)

### *Vladas Šlaitas*

#### MEMORIAL

When time transforms my bones to rocks and weeds,  
When I am here no more,  
Summon the rocks and bitter weeds to tell  
What love I bore

For the rushes gracing this autumnal dell,  
And how I long to take  
To the grave no cross but yet a spray of reeds  
For memory's sake.

(1920- )

(Rafael Sealey)



*Henrikas Nagys*

LATERNA OBSCURA

Two of us draw the child's face in the first snow.  
Beneath wild raspberry branches, my sister rocks her doll.  
Last night the workmen laid light snow on the hard earth  
and now they tar the wooden bridge over the Bartuva.  
—The new-born snow, light as my sister's hair.

Through the crouched, empty town of Samogitia  
the cossacks ride. They slash with naked swords  
white, breathless winter moonlight.

We sketch our brother's face in the first snow.  
The epileptic daughter of the watchman  
crumbles dry bread, scatters it into the ditch  
for the coffin. Snow drifts over the waxen face  
of the peasant woman and her pillow of pleated paper.  
And through the snowstorm echo  
the hoarse chant and the breathless bells.

Through the white soundless town of Samogitia asleep  
the cossacks ride. And their long whips cut  
blue winter moonlight shimmering in the trees.

No one kissed you goodnight. And no one wept  
with you for your dead mother. No one came to bury  
your father, hanged. Your land, empty and naked.  
Your earth, a peasant's palm. For you were not admitted  
into the kingdom. Gray garments fluttered  
like shrouds of long forgotten funerals  
—the vestments of a plague.

Through the poor town of Samogitia ride the cossacks  
who bear on their long lances, cut in pieces,  
the blue moonlight of winter.



On a bright Sunday morning in a radiant land  
the workmen tar the wooden bridge over the Bartuva.  
Deep under ice, and slow, the river flows into the sea.  
Under the raspberry branches, covered with snow,  
my sister's doll sleeps. Two of us trace  
our brother's face, asleep in the blue snow.

(Clark Mills)

## PASTORAL

The railroader's sons strum their guitars in the shade:  
Their sensitive fingers pluck a sad old tune.  
Silver planes zoom through quiet space.

The harsh hammering of the scythe clangs across the lake.

Smoke and dust suffocate the orchard; the trees droop.  
Barefoot children build sandcastles and sing sweet tunes  
In the parching sun on the tarstained beach.

The harsh hammering of the scythe clangs across the lake.

The rails and the windows glitter in the noon sun.  
Like tiny minnows, the silver planes flash in the sky.  
The apathetic old guitars thrum in the children's laughter.

The harsh hammering of the scythe clangs loudly here, by  
the hedge.

(1920- )

(Jean Reavey)

## *Eugenijus Gruodis*

## THE WORD

All was given: the ox,  
the donkey and the shed;

quiet forehead, the nostrils' warmth,  
donkey with its bowed head;

each bone in the hazel-soft  
hide; on the forehead, a white

star—and all was: the ox,  
the donkey and the night.

—These I have lost.

(1923- )

(Mariejo Fonsale)

### *Birutė Pūkelevičiūtė*

#### SLENDER, MY MOTHER

Slender, my mother, like the bird-cherry.  
Laden with me, she ripens her misfortune.  
Wide vessels choke with forest flowers. Closed,  
The yellow shutters. She awaits a holiday.

I come with Consecration, all the roads  
Empty, the organ still. At night my cradle  
Fills with sharp, fallen August stars. Mournful,  
My mother weeps. Now for the first time.  
For I am separated now, like boulder  
From cliff, and will roll down. Without her.

And it's true:

My hand slides from her clasp.  
In fall the orchards burn, flash red with fire.  
Wild drakes turn south, sheen of their wings bronzen.  
And I go.  
In rushes, the path narrows. Sedges are sharp as knives.  
Toothless, the hollow tree-trunks yawn. I tremble  
In every joint. But I do not turn back.

(1923- )

(Jack J. Stukas)

*Jonas Mekas*

OLD IS THE HUSH OF RAIN

Old is the hush of rain over the branches  
of underbrush; and the hoarse cries of the black cocks  
are old in the red summer dawn  
—old, this our speech:

of yellow fields of oats and barley,  
of shepherds' campfires in the blown wet loneliness of autumn,  
of the potato harvests, of the summer heats,  
of winter's white glint, creak and hiss of sleighs  
—of wagons log-laden, of stones in fallow fields,  
of red brick stoves, of gypsum in the pastures  
—and then at lamplit evening, as the autumnal fields go gray,  
of wagons for tomorrow's market,  
of drowned October highways washed away  
—days of the potato harvest.

Old, this our life—interminable generations  
that walked over the fields  
and traced their steps over the black earth  
—each foot of land still speaks and breathes the fathers.  
For from these cool stone wells  
they watered their evening herds,  
and when the clay floors of their cottages wore out  
and the walls crumbled slowly,  
from these fields they dug up the yellow sand,  
from these pits, yellow clay.

And when we too depart,  
others will rest on the same boundary-stones,  
scythe down the same lush meadows, plough these fields.  
And as they sit beside the tables, after work,  
each table, each clay pitcher, each beam in the wall  
will speak. They will remember  
wide gravel-pits of yellow sand,  
and in wind-ruffled fields of rye

the voices of our women singing from the flaxen edges  
—and this first scent in a new cottage:  
fresh fragrance of moss!

Old is the smell of clover,  
the horses whinnying in the summer nights,  
the chirp and chime of harrows, rollers, ploughs,  
grindstones of the mills,  
the green smells from the meadow, steeping flax,  
white gleam of kerchief of the weeders in the gardens.

Old is the hush of rain over the branches  
of underbrush; and the hoarse cries of the black cocks  
are old in the red summer dawn  
—old, this our speech.

(1922- )

(Clark Mills)

### *Vytautas Karalius*

#### BREAD AND RICE

Bread on my table—  
on your table, rice.  
Blue-eyed, I look at bread—  
your eyes half-closed, you look at rice.  
As bread sustains me,  
you are sustained by rice.  
Bread black as the earth,  
rice as white as teeth.  
I here, you in far Asia.  
But we are close as teeth and bread.

(1931- )

(Mariejo Fonsale)

### *Algimantas Mackus*

#### THE DROWNED GIRL

You longed for your own river:  
to drop your clothes on the shore  
and play with the water, naked.

Your river has come to you:  
on the shore, the poor shadow of a bush  
and the prints of naked feet.

And you have your own river:  
the wind that raised your veil, your kerchief,  
has given to you your river.

(1932-

)

(Algirdas Landsbergis)



### III

*In Other Languages*





*Vaclovas Labunauskis-Daujotas*

EPIGRAM TO BISHOP MERKELIS GIEDRAITIS

Age after age, great city-kingdoms crumble,  
Agelong, the monuments of warlords perish,  
Slow centuries devour the stately marbles,  
Tall oaks and pyramids succumb to time.  
But your renown, O Bishop, in your nature  
And piety and faith, will not taste death.  
Why? Because you have given to your people  
Sanctified bread, of which the praise and glory  
Cannot and will not die.

1599(?)

(Algirdas Landsbergis)

*Adam Mickiewicz*

(from) PAN TADEUSZ

INVOCATION

Mother, my country,\* my articulate health,  
He who has lost you learns late to love you,  
I who have loved you, see your long splendor,  
Yearning for you, I describe now my love.

Madam, Maid Madam, bright on Czenstochowa,  
Radiant on Ostra gate in the town of Wilno,  
Shelter of sleeping Novogrodek castle,  
(The family faithful, in faith the folk,)

your magic  
Restored the health I had lost in childhood.  
My mother weeping, upheld me to your kindness:  
I raised dead eyelids, saw, and could walk  
Straight to the door of your shrine, thanking God  
For the life you gave me. Give me now life  
To take us back to our countrymother's breast.  
Bring my sad soul to those softwooded hills,  
The green meadows that flank the blue Niemen,

The fields with their gay complexion of grain,  
The wheat golden, silver the rye,  
The mustard amber, buckwheat snowwhite,  
Where the clover in bloom is a young girl's blush  
And her bridebelt a ribbon of clean green turf  
Studded, my lady, with peaceful peartrees.

(Bill McFall)

## DAY BREAKS ON LITHUANIA

Out of the moist dark  
Dawn without glow brings  
Day without brightness.

Sunrise, a whiteness  
In a thatch of mist,  
Shows late to eastward.

Earth is as tardy;  
Cows go to pasture,  
Startle hares grazing.

Fog that had spared them  
Dayspring's alarum  
Dispels them with herds.

Groves where the damp birds  
Brood are their havens  
In the still woodland.

Storks clack from marshland;  
Ravens on haycocks  
Croak of wet weather.

---

\*In the original, Lithuania.

Scythes ring together,  
Cling of the sickle,  
Hone, hammer and dirge.

Fog at the field's edge  
Strangles the echo  
Of labor and song.

*(Donald Davie)*

## THE FOREST

Beyond incursion: the intricate abyss  
At the thicket's kernel. To the hunter's  
Tentative expeditions, it presents  
An unranged surface, secured  
From his knowledge as the bed of ocean  
From the shore-side fisher's. The face  
Of our Lithuanian forests, their form  
Are his familiar themes; the heart eludes him  
Confiding the mystery of its secrets  
Only in fable. For once you have passed  
The negotiable tangle of woods and wilds  
The rampart rises: stumps, logs, roots,  
Defended by water and quagmire, by weed-nets,  
By ant-hills, nest of the wasp and hornet  
And by the serpent. If, in your valour,  
You can surmount such dangers,  
There are yet worse. Ambush awaits you  
Where—like the dens of wolves—hiding their  
demons  
And hidden by growth of grass, the lakes  
Disguise by a small circumference  
Immeasurable depth. Iridescent waters  
Spotted as if with rust, steam-out their odours  
Decaying leaf and bark; the humped trees  
Stripped, worm-like and witch-like,  
Group for their sabbaths, branch  
Knotted to branch with moss. bearded in fungus

And warming their wasted trunks  
Round the fatal cauldron. The morass quivers  
Under its mist: beyond, you will advance  
Neither by dint of eye nor foot  
Through its ceaseless smoke. Explored  
In fable, here the forest ends  
Entering fertile ground, Eden of beasts and plants.

(1798-1855)

(Charles Tomlinson)

### *Jurgis Baltrušaitis*

#### MORNING SONG

Dawn, bright herald, proclaims the accession of Day  
To the valleys still heavy with night,  
And the clouds of sheer opal and ruby make way  
For the regal arrival of Light.

And the skies and the plains lie wide open, unfurled  
From the cope to the dew-covered base,  
As though God were withdrawing the veils of the world  
From His infinite marvel of space.

Sudden shudders now pass through the bay, as it flings  
Waves that whiten and roar and assault,  
And the crystal of silence falls shattered and rings  
Its joy to the jubilant vault . . .

(Ants Oras)

#### TO THE CRUCIFIED HOMELAND

An orphan's fate, to stray and stumble  
On ways of blood and fire, is thine . . .  
Yet in your wordless grief, my humble,  
Believing heart, await the Sign . . .

Hail beats thy crop, stark lightnings cleave it,  
Thy ancient shields are sighs and groans,  
Yet He who built this land, believe it,  
Makes wine of tears and bread of stones.

You labor painfully and slowly  
Through fruitless days of blight and sleet,  
Yet trust and deem divine the lowly,  
Mute stigmata of bleeding feet.

And though thy pain seem daily greater  
And blessings bitter from above,  
Lift up thy mind to thy Creator  
For the last victory of love.

(Ants Oras)

## TESTAMENT OF GRIEF

When pain assails your heart to tear it,  
Your naked heart, its helpless prey,  
Receive the gift of grief and bear it,  
Soul of my dark departing day.

When times of torment strike unbidden,  
With weeping eyes, through pain and stress,  
You peer at mystery, dimly hidden:  
God's ways are ways of deep distress . . .

We take the tasks that life enforces,  
Grope to the light its drabness bars  
And raise the load of mundane courses  
Up to the festival of stars.

And he, and only he, can sever  
His ties with dust in throes of birth  
Who loves the crown of thorns, forever  
Renouncing all he owned on earth.

(1877-1939)

(Ants Oras)

### *O. V. de L.-Milosz*

(from) INSOMNIA

. . . Beautiful, limpid days, when the hill flowered  
and in the warm gold sea of comfort the deep organs  
of hives at work sang for the gods of sleep.

and the fair cloud, her face in shadow, poured  
down the fresh mercies of her heart over the thirst  
of stones, the breathless wheat, the rose, my sister of the ruins!  
Where are you, perfect hours? And you, still garden path,  
beautiful in your tears? I dread, I shun, now,  
your gutted trunks. For it was there, young Love,  
who told such splendid tales, concealed himself.  
And Recollection waited thirty years. And no one  
called. No one. And Love dropped off to sleep.  
—O House, my Home! Why did you let me go,  
why did you not hold to me, keep me? Why,  
Mother, so many decades past, let two magicians  
—the autumn wind that lied, the endless winter hearth—  
so tempt me, you who well knew all my being,  
with their wild tales, redolent of old islands  
and sailing-ships lost in the great silent azure  
of time, and shores and maidens fallow in the South?

(Clark Mills)

## THE CARRIAGE, HALTED AT NIGHT

While we wait for the keys  
—doubtless he hopes to find them in the garments  
of Thecla, dead these thirty years—  
listen, Madame, hear the old muffled whisper  
of the night garden path . . .  
—So frail, so little, twice wrapped in my cloak,  
in my arms through the briars and nettles of the ruins  
I'll bring you to the high black manor door.  
Along this way the grandfather came home  
with a dead woman, years ago, from Vercelli.  
How black the house, and still!  
And for a child, forbidding.  
—Madame, you know already, it's a sad tale.  
They sleep in such far countries, quite scattered.  
One century now, their place has waited for them  
in the hill's heart. Their race dies with me here,  
O Lady of these ruins!  
Here you will see the boundless room of childhood.  
Here, silence, deep as the supernatural,

speaks from the dimmed portraits.  
On my couch, folded to myself at night,  
in the sound of the thaw behind the wall  
I heard, as if in hollow armor,  
their hearts beat.—What a wild  
homeland, unfinished for my fearful child!  
The lantern gutters and the moon is veiled.  
The owl summons her daughters from the grove.  
—While we wait for the keys, Madame,  
sleep a bit.—Sleep, my poor child, sleep,  
so pale, your head against my shoulder!  
You'll see, how beautiful the anxious forest  
adorned in her insomnias of June  
with flowers, O my child, like the chosen daughter  
of the mad queen. Burrow into my travelling cloak,  
the great autumnal snow melts on your face  
and you are drowsy.  
(In the lantern-light she turns, turns on the wind  
as in my childhood reveries,  
you know, the woman, the old woman.)  
—No, Madame, I hear nothing,  
He's so old, and his mind unhinged . . .  
I'd wager he has gone to find a drink!  
—So black a homestead for my fearful child,  
and deep, so deep in Lithuanian land!  
The locks rusted, vine-shoots withered,  
doors bolted, shutters closed  
and leaves on leaves piled in the lanes,  
a century of leaves!  
And all the servants dead.  
My memory, dead and gone.  
So black the manor for my candid child!  
I can recall the great-great-grandfather's  
orangery, and the theatre.  
The little owls ate from my hand there.  
The moon watched through the jasmine.  
That was another epoch.

—I hear a footstep in the garden lane.  
A shadow, look! Here's Witold with the keys.

(Clark Mills)





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